

THE LOST ENVIRONMENTALISTS: THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN  
CONSERVATIVE PROTESTANTS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT,  
1970-2010

A Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

“The Lost Environmentalists” offers the first historical account delineating the relationship between the religious right, a major Christian fundamentalist led political movement and the hotly debated issue of environmental protection. Past scholars believe this political/religious group traditionally opposed environmental protection efforts due to their conservative militant culture and long-held theological interpretations that marginalized nature as a simple resource for humanity’s financial benefit. In contrast, I reveal new ways the religious right understood nature while they promoted its protection throughout the 1970s to the early 1990s. During the latter decade, the movement ultimately adopted anti-environmentalist views.

The religious right’s relationship with nature and environmental protection is indeed complex and evolved over time. In response to Earth Day 1970, fundamentalists initially wanted to participate in the Earth Day observance. However, the secular environmental movement drove fundamentalists away by blaming Christianity for the ecological crisis. Nevertheless, the religious right continued promoting eco-friendly views as they built a national identity for themselves over the next twenty years. During this process, they portrayed nature sympathetically and in many cases understood it *as equally important* to economic prosperity. Accordingly, members participated in the twentieth anniversary of Earth Day in 1990. Almost simultaneously, the religious right’s most powerful leaders adopted anti-environmental views from pro-business allies and sought to crush the eco-friendly groundswell. Successfully overturning the community’s

nature sympathies took years and a variety of tactics including indirectly bullying congregants.

This research reveals an entirely new understanding of the religious right's environmental views and also contributes a new caveat to the movement's traditional definition as uncompromising religious militants. Furthermore, beyond filling a major gap in religious and environmental history and being of interest to political science, sociology and theology, "The Lost Environmentalists" will enable the general public to understand why an important political group currently opposes environmental efforts.

Dedicated to my parents and Iris.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

How did politically mobile conservative Protestants (also known as the religious right and the New Christian Right) come to reject the modern environmental movement? I first became aware of the strained relationship as a teenager while attending a Baptist church. One particular Sunday school lesson in 1995 stands out in my memory. The teacher warned against supporting environmentalists because, he said, they worshipped the earth. To prove the point, he cited the Disney cartoon movie *Pocahontas*, where the main character sings that all things in nature possess life, a spirit, and in turn should be respected and valued. Beyond this example, it was evident that other church members openly disliked environmentalists and what they stood for. Although the topic was not discussed often, if you listened carefully while participating in church activities or just chatting to folks after the morning service, most congregants clearly held anti-environmental views. If there were environmentalists among the membership, they kept quiet.

At first glance, the church's sentiment against environmentalists did not make sense. We lived in the picturesque Pioneer River Valley of Western Massachusetts surrounded by farmland and wooded mountains. Congregants enjoyed watching local wildlife wander by the parsonage and our pastor loved pointing out various bird species during nature hikes and picnics. The simple pleasure of nature appreciation however, became problematic if taken too far. One might enjoy watching nature, for example, but

environmental advocacy was clearly not socially acceptable. Years later, as a graduate student specializing in environmental history, I discovered there was very little research devoted to the relationship between the religious right and the environment. Those who had spent time on the subject offered helpful information, but the scholarship lacked an in-depth analysis explaining the religious group's journey to deny that God's earth needed preservation.

In 1995 a group of political scientists conducted a study on the relationship between environmentalists and Christianity. They published their findings in the *American Journal of Political Science* under the title "Faith and the Environment." The study's final analysis supported the initial hypothesis that conservative Protestants generally hold the environmental movement in disdain. The authors found that increased negative feelings toward environmentalism correlated with rising "religiosity." For example, the more people attended church, especially those within the conservative groups of evangelicals and fundamentalists, the higher the percentage of negative perceptions of environmentalists. In addition, within these groups, the religious leaders felt more strongly against environmentalism than did their parishioners. Thus, the more involved one is with their faith, the more likely they are to reject environmentalism.

That same year, political scientist Robert Booth Fowler published *The Greening of Protestant Thought*, chronicling environmental views held specifically by Protestants since the birth of the environmental movement in 1970. He found that although the community initially wanted to participate, they ended up not taking cooperative action until the 1980s when "moderate" evangelicals like Calvin DeWitt founded the Au Sable

Institute to teach fellow believers how to care for the earth.<sup>1</sup> Fowler, however, largely ignored perhaps the most politically important group within the conservative Protestant world, the fundamentalists who to this day spearhead the religious right, the fervently dedicated political allies of today's Republican Party. Fowler devoted eleven pages to analyzing fundamentalists and concluded that they either dismissed or opposed environmental efforts because of the premillennialist belief that Christ would return soon so protecting nature was unnecessary. The other argument he used rested on the idea that fundamentalists interpreted Genesis 1:26, 28, in the biblical Creation story, to mean that God gave the earth to mankind with the commandment to "dominate." Fowler wrote that fundamentalists understood these verses to mean that the Earth is a simple resource to be used for the benefit of people. He singled out religious right co-founder and popular Charismatic televangelist Pat Robertson who, he argued, endorsed the latter belief. Several years later, English Professor Linda Kintz reached similar conclusions to Fowler in her book *Between Jesus and the Marketplace* (1997). She also specifically used Robertson to represent the anti-environmental opinions of his religious community.

A closer exploration into the relationship between conservative Protestants and the environmental movement came from an unpublished dissertation by University of Chicago Ph.D. candidate David Kenneth Larsen titled *God's Gardeners: American*

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<sup>1</sup> Fowler and Larsen focus primarily on more "moderate" evangelicals who embraced Christian environmentalism during the 1980s and whose cause grew exponentially in the 1990s. Examples include Calvin DeWitt's Au Sable Institute, the Evangelical Environmental Network, and the National Association of Evangelicals. This dissertation only lightly touches on the groups they cover and instead centers on the religious right, who are known today to reject appeals from the scientific community for support of environmental policies such as regulations to stop global warming.

*Protestant Evangelicals Confront Environmentalism, 1967-2000*. Larsen wrote that primarily in response to the birth of the secular environmental movement on Earth Day 1970, evangelical and fundamentalist leaders promoted congregant participation, but interest soon dissipated. Fundamentalists, he explained, largely ignored the issue until anti-environmental feelings trickled into the community in the early 1980s with the assistance of books like the bestseller *Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow: The New Age Movement and Our Coming Age of Barbarism* by Constance Cumbeys. Like Fowler and Kinz, Larsen used Pat Robertson to represent his community, reporting Robinson's belief that humans are commanded to dominate earth, an understanding that became more widespread among fundamentalists after the 1990 Earth Day observance, reflecting their attachment to free enterprise. In closing, Larsen singled out the signing in 2000 of the Cornwall Alliance, a statement drafted by the more conservative of evangelicals and fundamentalists, as a positive sign that they are beginning to warm towards environmental efforts. Nevertheless, overall he still described fundamentalists as the militant close-minded type and relegated them to the status of out-of-touch radicals.<sup>2</sup>

I also observed the same conservative Protestant response to Earth Day 1970 as noted by Larsen. The leadership indeed tried to spark interest among followers, but I

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<sup>2</sup> David Larsen, "God's Gardeners: American Protestant Evangelicals Confront Environmentalism, 1967-2000" (doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 2001), 340. Other basic problems with Larsen's work include his reliance on only published sources throughout the dissertation. His overall history of the relationship between conservative Protestants and the environment is satisfactory in its basic outlines but lacks explication. For example, he accounts for the disinterest among fundamentalists after Earth Day 1970 with only a few brief suggestions and he treats the connection between the religious right and free enterprise conservatives in the 1990s as merely coincidental.

argue their reaction to the environmental movement was much more complicated than disinterest or rejection. As an answer to the looming ecological crisis, conservative Protestants encouraged fellow believers to respect the earth because it was made by God, although it was of secondary importance to humanity as understood within their theologically-based hierarchical construction of God's creation. This view conflicted with how the secular environmental movement perceived nature and why they directly identified the Christian faith as the destroyer of the earth. In consequence of answering such allegations, evangelicals and fundamentalists could not control the terms of the ecological debate and failed to develop a position towards environmental protection. This dilemma, however, did not prompt conservative Protestants and those who later became the religious right into labeling themselves anti-environmentalists. Instead, they connected to ideas of nature in alternative ways.

In the early 1970s the religious community used their understanding of God's hierarchical creation in an effort to restore humanity to its natural and proper place within God's originally intended design. This concern was a direct reaction to the counterculture-inspired social movements of the late 1960s such as feminism or gay rights, which the laity perceived as groups lobbying for the social acceptance of unnatural or improper lifestyles. The word "unnatural" in this context does not imply original sin, but rather rejection of what God designed in the Garden of Eden. Support for such thinking frequently surfaced in church sermons by pastors emotionally pointing to the Creation story in Genesis, which laid out instructions regarding a specific hierarchy and behavior. In this setting, the community's most passionately fought-for

issues encompassed the effort to preserve God's original plan for people. Examples include celebrating God-ordained separate gender roles, traditional marriage, and fighting against abortion, the latter being a product of what they saw as destroying the ordained hierarchy by replacing God as Creator with humanity's medical science. Conservative Protestants knew humans could not go back to Eden, but adamantly believed that the design God implemented there should be recognized and strived for. Conservative Protestants believed that when humanity is restored to its God-ordained design, then all social ills, including the ecological crisis, would be remedied. It was these views, framed in "God's creation" versus "manmade artificial," that in part drove conservative Protestants towards forming the New Christian Right. At their core, the people who made up the New Christian Right thought of themselves as preservationists of God's greatest creation, humanity.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of nature played other roles in the quest to save humanity's proper place in God's hierarchical creation through the religious community's construction of a

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<sup>3</sup> As religious historian Matt Sutton explains in his book *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism*, the religious community that became the fundamentalists of the later twentieth century had a history of being politically conservative and a friend of the Republican Party since the 1920s. Bethany Moreton, in her book *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*, also points out the growing connection between free enterprise and conservative Protestants, which she proves began flourishing in the mid-twentieth century. Nevertheless, this relationship did not inhibit conservative Protestants from promoting concern towards the natural world and did not allow anti-environmental sentiments into the mainstream of the community until the 1990s. The Cornwall Declaration, which Larsen claims shows a softening towards environmental protection, was actually the culmination of many in the religious right elite trying to squash their own parishioners' interest in becoming part of the blooming "liberal" evangelical environmental organizations of the 1990s that Fowler and Larsen spend most of their time discussing.

platform from which to launch the religious right movement. During the 1970s they constructed a unique history of the United States by making their faith a primary reason for the success of the nation. The idea of humanity as a creation of God and the idea of earth's wilderness as the realm where humans were meant to dominate but not abuse both functioned in central roles. Conservative Protestants depicted the "unconquered" forests of North America as healthy obstacles, which encouraged "real" Americans of the past to conform to their God-ordained gender-specific family norms. For example, men used their strength to cut down trees and build fences while women tended to the children at home. This narrative was commonly taught in the ever-growing number of Christian and homeschools throughout America. Accompanying and in harmony with these views until 1989, the community's mainstream supported pro-environmental messages of conservation and respect for God's earth.<sup>4</sup> Surprisingly, during these decades their ecofriendly views did not clash to any great degree with the group's ever-increasing love for free enterprise.

In consequence of these alternative understandings of nature, anti-environmentalism did not make its way into the mainstream of the religious right during the 1970s or the 1980s as Larsen leads us to believe. Instead, opposition assumed a foothold only during the 1990s. Moreover, that development should not be understood as

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<sup>4</sup> In his dissertation *God's Gardener's*, Larsen frequently describes conservative Protestant feelings towards nature conservation as "minimizing" environmental efforts. This may be true during the 1990s, when the leadership explained that people should care for the earth but capitalism was more important or that global warming was not caused by humans. The religious right's environmental rhetoric until 1989, however, was much more compassionate toward nature and in many cases, as will be shown, depicted nature as being as important as American economics.

a pan-conservative Protestant phenomenon where an entire community miraculously took a hard position on the issue.<sup>5</sup> Beginning in the 1990's anti-environmentalism was ultimately *forced* into the New Christian Right by the leadership via a strategy of effective bullying with the help of free enterprise advocates. This approach proved successful over time. In short, present-day religious right opposition to environmental protection policies was the product of a lengthy and complicated history that took place over a period of decades. Unlike their entrenched position on abortion, the people associated with the religious right did not come to open antipathy towards the environmental movement until recently. Their prior response demonstrates logic, thought, and a reluctance to ignore the health of God's world.

### Background and Importance of the Religious Right

Today about 78 percent of citizens in the United States consider themselves Christians.<sup>6</sup> Within this group are evangelicals and fundamentalists who will often be referred to as "conservative Protestants." This latter term is defined by the single fact that they regard the Bible as the inerrant word of God.<sup>7</sup> This means, for example, they

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<sup>5</sup> Larsen mostly focuses on Cumbeys' book to represent what those associated with the religious right thought about efforts to protect the environment during the 1980s. Other than this, Larsen implies that the group did not give the issue further thought.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Newport, "This Christmas, 78% of Americans Identify as Christians," The Gallup Poll. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/124793/This-Christmas-78-Americans-Identify-Christian.aspx> (accessed Feb 14, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Conservative Christians understand the Bible as written by the hand of men. However, they believe God directly told these authors what to say. The mission statement of



literally believe God created the universe, including the earth, in six twenty-four hour days as described in Genesis chapter one. Although evangelicals and fundamentalists are extremely similar in religious doctrine, it is the fundamentalists who will be at the center of this dissertation because they are understood as the driving force behind the religious right.

When defining fundamentalism, religious historians most often cite George Marsden, who wrote that it is “militantly anti-modernist Protestant evangelicalism.” In addition to citing Marsden, historian Mathew Sutton, author of *American Apocalypse*, quotes religious right co-founder Jerry Falwell, who succinctly self-described a fundamentalist as being, “... an evangelical who is angry about something.” Sutton went on to echo Marsden, explaining, “Fundamentalism, according to Marsden, had deep intellectual roots; but it was also reactionary. The faithful organized in response to perceived threats to the faith.”<sup>8</sup> Marsden’s work focused primarily on the “reactionary” motivations of fundamentalists in order to help explain the phenomenon of the religious group’s increased political participation in the 1980s.<sup>9</sup>

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conservative Christian churches will either state that members believe the Bible as being the literal or the inspired word of God. They usually mean the same thing, as God wrote through the authors or “inspired” them to write what they did. At the same time, the term “inspired” does allow some leeway for stretching interpretation.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge, Ma: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), xi.

<sup>9</sup> This dissertation is focused on those within the conservative Protestant community who became or associated with the religious right, also known as the New Christian Right movement. Some people in this group were active members of the religious right while others were only loosely connected.

Sutton demonstrates in his book *American Apocalypse* that fundamentalist interest in politics is nothing new and had existed throughout the twentieth century. Indeed, the conservative Protestant world continuously progressed, evolved, actively pursued converts and participated in wider American society. Beyond the scope of Sutton's work but in line with his argument, during the early 1970s, evangelist Billy Graham tested the possibility of initiating a religious/political movement among his followers and subsequently held rallies for Richard Nixon, who addressed the faithful and those whom he called the "silent majority."<sup>10</sup> Graham, however, abandoned mixing politics with religion after the Watergate scandal. Other preachers, including Falwell and Robertson, specifically fought the late 1960s counterculture progressive movements throughout the 1970s until they broke visibly onto the mainstream political landscape with the religious right organization called the Moral Majority, founded in 1979.

Directly following the 1980 Presidential election, the Moral Majority took credit for Republican Ronald Reagan's upset of incumbent Democrat Jimmy Carter. In response, the media published scores of articles about the movement while political scientists debated the organization's effectiveness. It was not, however, until the Congressional election of 1994 that academics finally agreed that the religious right actually impacted results in the political world for their longtime allies, the GOP. Researchers found that 75 percent of evangelicals voted Republican in 1994 and these regular church attendees were likely to cite family values (47 percent) or abortion (29

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<sup>10</sup> This term was fashioned in response to the loud counterculture movement of the time that publically protested the war in Vietnam.

percent) as their most important issues.<sup>11</sup> Today it is not uncommon for members of conservative Protestant churches to feel that it is impossible for any of them to be Democrats.<sup>12</sup>

Although it is a somewhat common reaction, dismissing the religious right as simply the radical fringe or a “bunch of nuts” is a mistake. The group is affecting elections on a national scale. Presidential candidates know this and actively court their votes. The higher education institutions operated by fundamentalists are common speaking destinations for Republican candidates today. George W. Bush, for example, scheduled a presentation at Bob Jones University in 2000 and Mitt Romney spoke at the late Jerry Falwell’s Liberty University in 2012. More recently, GOP candidate Ted Cruz launched his 2016 presidential campaign at Liberty University and his competitor Jeb Bush spoke at Liberty’s commencement just months later. In the book *Religion and The Bush Presidency*, edited by Mark Rozell and Gleaves Whitney, the evangelical vote is specifically credited in the 2000 Republican primaries with destroying candidate John McCain’s promising campaign after he made disparaging remarks about the need to pander to Christian voters.<sup>13</sup> George W. Bush, on the other hand, openly brandished his born-again identity and assumed the endorsement from the religious right, which had

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<sup>11</sup> Kellstedt, Lyman A., John C. Green, James L. Guth, and Corwin E. Smidt. “Has Godot Finally Arrived? Religion and Realignment.” *The Public Perspective* 6 (June/July 1995): 18-19.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew J. Wilson, J., *From Pews to Polling Places: Faith and Politics in the American Religious Mosaic*. (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007), 17.

<sup>13</sup> Mark J. Rozell and Gleaves Whitney, eds. *Religion and The Bush Presidency* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 17.

grown in political importance and effectiveness throughout the 1990s. After Bush secured the White House in 2000, his campaign manager Karl Rove remarked that the GOP had captured fourteen million evangelical votes and planned to garner more in the next election.<sup>14</sup>

The conservative Protestant community is politically effective because they are a cohesive, passionate demographic dedicated to bringing their vision of a better world into reality. Robert Putnam points out their ceaseless efforts in his seminal book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. He writes that from 1964 to 1995, participation fell in American religious communities nationwide by between 25 to 50 percent.<sup>15</sup> Evangelical membership, on the other hand, grew during the same time period by one third. This group, he finds, is also three to five times more likely to be active in civic and political life. Studies by other scholars also found that conservative Protestants, in addition to growing in number, are the most devout among Christians in the United States.<sup>16</sup> Sociology Professor James Davison Hunter explains throughout *The Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, how this politically mobile religious community continuously fights a very real culture war in today's world.

This dissertation analyzes the frequently misunderstood and often-dismissed politically-potent religious community in America today as it relates to nature and the

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<sup>14</sup> David E. Campbell, ed. *A Matter of Faith: Religion in the 2004 Presidential Election*. (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press 2007), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: Collapse and Revival of American Community*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 72.

<sup>16</sup> David C. Legee, Lyman A. Kellstedt, eds. *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics*. (Armonk, New York and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 126.

environment. Although scholars like Marsden have a point that fundamentalists are in some sense “militant reactionaries,” at least with regard to the environment they do not fit easily into such a clear-cut package. These traditional understandings often lead to dismissal and simplification of an entire political demographic by the general public, who write them off as simply unreasonable and irrational. Elsewhere in our society, scientists repeatedly tell the American people that the environmental problem of global warming is the most important issue of our time. Thus, instead of ignoring the religious right who reject environmental efforts, including solutions to global warming, understanding the roots of their opposition should be considered vital to finding mutually beneficial avenues into the future.

### Chapter Sequence

This dissertation’s chapters are organized as follows. The first explores Conservative Protestant leaders who initially wanted their religious community to participate in the modern environmental movement. However, because of problems including accusations initiated by the secular environmental movement, a solid religious position could not be reached. In consequence, the spark for Christian environmentalism diminished but did not disappear.

The second chapter broaches the underlying factors that consumed the Conservative Protestants during the 1970s, triggering them to form the religious right in 1979. The laity felt a need for a national revival in which humanity would return to its

proper place within God's creation. They believed that only when mankind abandoned "artificial" ideas stemming from the late 1960s countercultural movements such as feminism, and strove to return to their original role as designed in the Garden of Eden, would God reward humanity with a healthier society and resolve the ecological crisis. This viewpoint was one reason why Christian environmental stewardship assumed the status of a background issue among conservative Protestants.

Chapter three continues exploring the foundations for the later construction of the religious right through the lens of nature. One prime focus was the shaping of conservative Protestant nationalism, which gave the community an identity making them more than just a reactionary group against modernization. Within the narrative they built for themselves, the natural world played an important and valuable role. The most fascinating primary source used in this chapter is Christian school educational material produced by the two top publishers, Bob Jones University Press and A Beka Books.

Chapter four covers the decade of the 1980s when the Moral Majority vigorously promoted their political importance and strengthened relationships with the Republican Party. During this period, mixed environmental opinions moved about the community, but instead of anti-environmentalism taking center stage, eco-friendly messages were more prominent. The increasing quantity of Christian education material proves this latter point, even in the face of the movement's ever-growing acceptance of free enterprise. Surprisingly, co-founder of the religious right movement, Pat Robertson, supported environmental-friendly action by volunteering and promoting eco-friendly sentiments in very public venues throughout the decade.

Chapter five delves into the 1990s and 2000s, when anti-environmentalism slowly became accepted among the religious right's mainstream. "Slowly" is the key word as environmental opposition was a development that took time for the religious right to embrace. Initially, some within the fundamentalist world made considerable efforts to join more "liberal" evangelicals who promoted a Christian eco-friendly approach to the environment. The leadership, however, stepped up efforts to crush parishioner arguments for supporting secular environmentalists who were then and are today specifically trying to stop global warming. In particular, from 1990 to his death in 2007, Pastor Jerry Falwell increasingly worried about the environmental movement, understanding it as a threat to the long-time alliance between his politically-motivated religious group and the GOP. His desperation heightened as the years rolled by and his arguments warning against Christian participation grew stronger and more pointed.

In closing, this history does not depict an illogical and close-minded voting demographic, but rather reveals an important growing religious community thoughtfully struggling to understand the ideal relationship between humanity and economics, while respecting God's creation. Like the rest of the world, those in the religious right have tried to find the correct balance between humanity and God's earth. The present-day animosity towards environmentalists held among those associated with the religious right evolved over time and is truly complex.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LANDSCAPE OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

This section offers a brief overview of the larger currents in American society that helped forge both the religious right and the environmental movements. Progressive movements spawned by the counterculture during the late 1960s will be briefly noted to frame the central subjects of this dissertation. Each brief description includes references pertaining to the rich past of the various movements in order to familiarize or remind the reader of the events that contributed to creating the climate that directly influenced or produced the religious right and environmental movements.

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While the United States experienced economic prosperity following World War II, social movements cut inroads into mainstream American politics in reaction to long-practiced injustices in the United States. During the 1950s the Civil Rights Movement brought about advancements in racial equality, particularly in the American South, by methodically chipping away at segregation laws. The 1955 Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* caused many frightened white parents to enroll their children in private schools. Integration came late to different regions in the South and throughout the 1960s and 1970s the pressure to provide an alternative venue for elementary and secondary level students escalated. Seeking a solution, conservative Protestant parents organized and built schools through their churches while some chose



home schooling. However, the growing Christian/homeschool movement that was initially fueled by racism quickly evolved to incorporate a more socially acceptable rejection of something else that bloomed in the later 1960s and early 1970s. This new threat was the looming “counterculture.”

The counterculture encompassed a vast spectrum of cultural and political elements that directly spurred the New Christian Right into existence. One central issue that carried the counterculture into mainstream America was concern over the armed services draft, which forced young men nationwide to question the decision handed down by an older generation of politicians to turn them into soldiers to fight in Vietnam.

The first student teach-ins protesting the war in Vietnam began at the University of Michigan in March of 1965 and the cause was magnified subsequently by a more organized effort led by The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), who met in Washington D.C. supported by 20,000 protestors. By 1968 calls to end the conflict in Vietnam reached a climax when college students seized campus buildings in a variety of schools across the nation. The media covered former soldiers publically throwing away their medals in protest of the war, while draft dodgers left the country and young men burned selective service cards.

As Vietnam protesting continued, women recognized gender inequality within their own social activist groups, including the SDS and the Civil Rights Movement organization called the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). In response, they fueled a movement already gaining momentum for women’s rights. Developed in 1960, the birth control pill offered women greater control over their bodies

and the 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan attacked the traditional and expected position of women in society as caretakers of the family and home. Women need to find out who they are, Friedan wrote, arguing females should have the right to explore other opportunities beyond that of homemaker. The 1964 Civil Rights Act outlawed gender discrimination and later feminists led by Ti-Grace Atkinson and Susan Brownmiller pushed for more radical changes. The women's liberation movement claimed other victories such as the Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 and the near realization of the Equal Rights Amendment.

The spirit of the counterculture's ongoing social activism also helped spark exponential growth of the gay rights movement in 1969. Gay rights activist groups had existed throughout the twentieth century but enjoyed increased awareness and support after two days of violent confrontation and rioting following a police raid at a gay bar in Greenwich Village, New York City. The event led to a rejuvenation of the community's existing organizations and the formation of new ones where none previously existed. Eric Marcus in his book, *Making Gay History* wrote: "By the early 1970s the number of gay and lesbian organizations soared to nearly four hundred, ranging from politically oriented groups with names like Gay Liberation Front, to chapters of the predominantly gay and lesbian Metropolitan Community Church."<sup>17</sup> Marcus specifically pinpointed college campuses as venues where these organizations often found homes. If educational institutions refused to recognize them, lawsuits were filed. The gay rights movement

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<sup>17</sup> Eric Marcus, *Making Gay History: The Half-Century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights* (New York: Perennial, 2002), 121.

gradually gained steam and in 1979 the Carter Administration invited representatives from the homosexual community to participate in the White House Conference on Families.

While the aforementioned advocate groups struggled to make life better for people, another movement developed in hopes of protecting the earth and all of its creatures. In 1962 biologist Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* and the conclusions sent shockwaves throughout the U.S. She warned that the pesticide chemical DDT was not the miracle product it was thought to be. Birds, Carson argued, consumed DDT-ridden pests, which consequently impaired their ability to procreate because the compound compromised the integrity of eggshells. After the book's release, chemical companies spent hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to discredit Carson but, as the decade wore on, the public increasingly became convinced of her arguments after witnessing massive fish kills connected to water pollution. Environmental awareness was further heightened when the media covered the 1969 Cayahoga River fire near Cleveland, Ohio, as well as the oil spill disaster off the coast of Santa Barbara, California. The following year, college students organized to form the first Earth Day observance on April 22, 1970. Teach-ins were held across the United States, Fifth Avenue in New York City was shut down, and Congress recessed. Twenty million people participated in Earth Day activities, propelling a nationwide movement to protect nature. Directly in response, Republican President Richard Nixon established the Environmental Protection Agency and signed into law a number of environmental regulations including the Clean Air and Water Act.

Almost ten years after the birth of the environmental movement, conservative Protestants politically and formally mobilized themselves under the name of the Moral Majority. However, their roots within the realm of activism stem far back in the twentieth century. After weathering national embarrassment surrounding the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925, American conservative Protestant fundamentalists kept the faith, ignoring critics who speculated that their culture of literally interpreting the Bible would soon die out. Fundamentalists carried on converting souls and waited for Christ's return, while evangelist Billy Graham proved remarkably successful at growing the ranks of evangelicals, the more tolerant sibling of the uncompromising fundamentalists. Although these two groups were always interested in the secular world's politics, they made increased efforts to improve life on earth during the 1970s. This development was a response to what they considered radical changes brought about by the counterculture's social movements, particularly women's liberation and gay rights. The fundamentalists led the backlash and many evangelicals joined in.

The conservative Protestant reaction to social changes in the 1970s was not entirely new, but rather a continuation of their extreme radical fringe, which had incessantly complained during previous decades about the threat of Communism and anything else they did not feel was "Christian" and conservative. During the 1950s for example, Billy James Hargis warned about communists in the United States. Hargis' ranting was politically ineffective as was fundamentalist and defrocked Presbyterian minister Carl McIntire, who likewise tied faith to politics. McIntire started his long career raving about threats to American society in the 1930s and tried to reach the public

through his radio broadcast and his newspaper, *The Christian Beacon*. The social movements of the 1960s and 1970s gave him an increased amount of ammunition and he promoted rallies at state capitals and Washington D.C. Advertisements in the *Christian Beacon* read: “Your presence is necessary. Call for the immediate release of the prisoners of war in North Vietnam. Join with patriots in support of our boys in Vietnam. Demand complete victory in Vietnam over the Communist enemy. AMERICA, AWAKE!”<sup>18</sup> At one rally, McIntire expected 100,000 in attendance. The mainstream conservative Protestant magazine *Christianity Today* reported, however, that the rally garnered only 50,000<sup>19</sup> – still not a poor turnout for an event supported by the radical and uncompromising McIntire, suggesting he was in tune with a demographic that numbered more than just a few radical-thinking and paranoid Americans.

During the 1970s more moderate (relative to McIntire and Hargis) religious leaders organized and built a movement against the social changes supported by the counterculture’s progressive ideals. It was during this decade that fundamentalist pastor Jerry Falwell transitioned from speaking about largely spiritual matters to directing a political movement he passionately led until his death in 2007. Other organizers along with Falwell included Charismatic televangelist Pat Robertson and lesser known evangelical/fundamentalist pastors and organization leaders Adrian Rogers, Harold Lindsell, Jim Vines, and James Dobson. In his autobiography, Falwell specifically credited the Supreme Court’s decision in *Roe v. Wade* as the defining moment when he

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<sup>18</sup> Carl McIntire, “Victory Rally,” *Christian Beacon* XXXV, no. 13 (May 7, 1970): 5.

<sup>19</sup> William Willoughby. “Carl McIntire’s Victory: ‘In This Sign Conquer.’” *Christianity Today* XIV, no. 15 (April 24, 1970): 35.

realized fundamentalists must get involved in politics. According to the book, he met with his family and told them what the Court's decision meant. His family agreed and from 1973 onward, Falwell's sermons increasingly incorporated themes regarding current events tied in with morality and politics.<sup>20</sup>

Beyond *Roe v. Wade*, Falwell and fellow fundamentalists expressed anger about a variety of other contemporary issues stemming from a rapidly changing culture. Almost anything new could draw their ire: men sporting long hair, the drug culture, rock music, gay culture, free love, and women trying to find acceptance in the work place. These problems led fundamentalists to expand the number of K-12 Christian schools that were already growing in response to integration, and the community additionally established higher education institutions. In 1971 Falwell founded Liberty College and three years later another well-known fundamentalist school, Pensacola Christian College, opened its doors. Pat Robertson founded Regent College in 1977 as a communications graduate school. The new colleges performed more services than just providing students with a "safe" learning environment devoid of what they considered cultural dangers. The schools functioned as a platform to develop the religious right. Liberty College, for example, became a destination for politicians to seek votes and for other Christian notables to share their faith. During the span of one month in 1983,

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<sup>20</sup> Little exists in Liberty Archives dating before the early 1970s. Thus it is difficult to validate Falwell's claim that before 1973 he did not think Christians should get involved in politics. However, it was only after *Roe v. Wade* that Falwell began actively building the foundations that led to the religious right and the attempt to realize America as a Christian nation. This latter aspect is further explained and documented in Chapter Three.

Liberty College hosted Vice President George W. H. Bush, NASA astronaut Jack Lousma, and Secretary of the Interior James Watt.<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, Pensacola Christian College and the much older fundamentalist school Bob Jones University realized the K-12 Christian and homeschools needed tailored education materials and in response founded lucrative publishing companies. The educational material itself was designed specifically to give Christian students information their parents endorsed. Students could now be taught that Communism, evolution, drugs, premarital sex, and liberals were not only anti-Christian but un-American. The educational material explained in depth the fundamental elements that pastors such as Falwell covered in general terms during Sunday morning services or at his “I Love America” rallies held nationwide. In a way, this educational material served as a detailed and evolving Christian American manifesto that prepared the next generation of conservative Protestants to fight for their causes here on earth.

Interestingly, among the social movements that galled the religious right, the 1970 call to protect the environment proved unique. The environmental movement was different in that conservative Protestants, including leaders Falwell and Robertson, did not group it in with the others. After all, who could refuse the Biblical statement that good Christians should respect and preserve the Earth God had made? The following is the story of the evolving relationship between the effort to protect the environment and

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<sup>21</sup> Asset ID: 223671, Tape No: F1-LHF-026.mov, Tape Name: LBC Graduation 1983-James Watt Line (Reel 2 of 2), Rec Date: 05-09-1983, Tape Series: LU Historical Footage. Liberty University Communication Department.

the movement known as the religious right – both products of the larger cultural and political landscape of post-World War II America.



### CHAPTER III

#### CONSERVATIVE PROTESTANTS RESPOND TO THE FOUNDING OF EARTH DAY

Until the late 1960s American conservative Protestants, as a group, had not thought seriously about their relationship towards the natural world. At that time, however, their faith was blamed for providing the theological and philosophical platform that drove the western world to cause the ecological crisis by abusing nature as a simple commodity. Devout Christians from various denominations took exception to the accusation and fought back through the written word. Within the conservative Protestant community, some agreed with the charge and called for change while others refused to accept fault. More importantly, the allegation forced the leadership to explain what the relationship between people and nature should actually be. This latter response amounted to personal points of view and interpretations on a new subject, which led to a mixed and unfocused discussion lacking fixed goals or group action. The newly formed secular environmental movement further aggravated the conversation by continuing to blame Christianity for the ecological crisis. Thus, conservative Protestants met proposals to protect nature in a defensive and uncertain posture, one that did not allow them to control the debate. The environmental discussion subsequently dwindled but did not disappear. When it came to the energy crisis in 1973, the religious community took action to conserve resources but not with compassion for the earth in mind.

## What is the God-ordained Relationship Between Humanity and Nature?

Economic stability along with technology and scientific progress in post-World War II America made it easier to feel humanity now possessed unprecedented tools to conquer nature. Advertisements praised American capitalism by showcasing vast assortments of commodities available at newly built shopping malls and grocery stores. For the inundated housewife, no-fuss frozen TV dinners were ready to eat after a quick trip to the oven. Beyond the kitchen, travelers enjoyed using jet-propelled airplanes to reach far-away destinations. Americans also looked forward to a future of plenty with the aid of miracle insecticides that promised larger crop yields. It seemed the “howling wilderness” that had daunted the pilgrims and early pioneers, was a thing of the past.

Rachel Carson’s 1962 book *Silent Spring* soon put the brakes on mankind’s notion of unfettered rule. Apparently, there were side effects to all this wonderful “progress” and people began wondering just what gave Americans the hubris to believe they could reshape nature for human convenience without consequences. Then, in 1967, Lynn White Jr., a U.C.L.A. medieval historian, neatly explained the root cause for environmental degradation in his article “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” first featured in *Science* magazine. White plainly stated the destruction of nature was the fault of Christian philosophies pertaining to the God-ordained human relationship to the natural world. White argued that Christianity supported and promulgated a Christian hierarchical view of mankind that separated humans from nature and justified human dominion over it. He employed numerous examples to back up this conclusion,

including the most obvious of biblical verses, Genesis 1:26 and 28, in which God gave man “dominion” over the earth and every living thing as well as commanding humans to be “fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth.” White continued in this vein of thought, asserting that Christians think they were made in God’s image, and thus are “gods” over creation. He claimed that monotheistic Christianity also conflicted strongly with nature-friendly traditional European pagan beliefs that each tree and body of water should be respected and revered since each held spirits. Therefore, Christians took it upon themselves to cut down trees and make nature work for humanity; in the process they destroyed the earth and paganism.<sup>22</sup> White contended that this disconnection between nature and humanity also explained why many Christians rejected Darwin’s theory of evolution, which promoted the idea that human origins are found in nature – we are descendants of lesser animals. White believed that although modern America might be in a post-Christian era, society continued to hold this Judeo-Christian mindset. White’s article was not restricted to those in the academic world, but was reproduced in other publications, including those of the Christian community’s various denominations, which issued answers to White’s accusations.<sup>23</sup>

One of the most noteworthy individuals to respond to White’s article was Francis A. Schaeffer, a trusted fundamentalist/evangelical intellectual.<sup>24</sup> During his early career,

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<sup>22</sup> Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science, New Series* 155, no. 3767 (Mar. 10, 1967): 1205.

<sup>23</sup> Richard T. Wright. “Responsibility for the Ecological Crisis.” *BioScience*, 20, no. 15 (Aug 1, 1970): 851.

<sup>24</sup> Francis Schaeffer firmly believed in the inerrancy of the Bible, which allowed him to mesh with fundamentalists theologically. However, he enjoyed associating with anyone

Schaeffer worked with fundamentalist and political radical Carl McIntire, but the two parted ways and later in the 1950s Schaeffer moved with his family to the mountains of Switzerland with the singular goal of proving God's existence. He founded a school/institution called L'Abri (the shelter) in which visitors could participate in discussing the philosophy of God and all surrounding topics. Building on his intellectual conversations at L'Abri, he began lecturing on various issues and publishing books that sold well among the Christian community.

In 1968 Schaeffer directly responded to White's article. That year Schaeffer published his first two books, *The God Who is There* and *Escape from Reason*. Both included an in-depth account describing humanity's proper relationship to God. He explained that everything, including mankind and nature, from the universe down to the soil, was connected and that only God as the creator was autonomous. At the same time, because humans were made in the image of God, they were not only part of the physical world but also the supernatural. He underscored the understanding that people must accept their place within this hierarchy. In consequence, life will finally have meaning and prove that humans were designed, or in other words programmed, by God to live within this framework. Schaeffer repeatedly brought this concept up throughout the rest of his career, weaving the message into his lectures and books, sometimes reminding audiences that they needed to read his other publications to truly understand and grasp

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to discuss God and therefore could also be understood as an evangelical. Nevertheless, the very important works he produced, such as *How Should We Then Live*, were thoroughly embraced by fundamentalists, the more conservative side of evangelicals. Falwell, for example, highly respected Schaeffer's work and felt it articulated and supported the philosophies of the Moral Majority.

the deep knowledge he offered. His other late 1960s book, *Death in the City*, also reiterated the God/human relationship and by 1977 all three volumes combined had sold over half a million copies.<sup>25</sup> While he wrote and published these books, Schaeffer also devoted time to developing his position on the “proper” or God-intended place of the natural world. He asked fellow Christians to not only respect their relationship to God but also value His other creations.

Schaeffer’s understanding of humanity’s proper place explained the Christian way to approach the ecological crisis. While lecturing in St. Louis, Missouri, he stated that although humanity may be a higher creation of God, people are also a part of the natural world. Mankind, he said, was not “autonomous” or absolute ruler of the earth; only God held such a high position. “Isn’t it true,” Schaeffer asked, “that all too often we act as though we are sovereign towards the tree? We’re not sovereign over the tree... Only God is sovereign over the tree. All I am given is that I am made in God’s image. But I’m not king of the world. This must be the thing to be understood.”<sup>26</sup>

Schaeffer also tried describing the proper hierarchical relationship through art history. By comparing the art produced in different periods and cultures he explained which ones were morally correct in the way they valued God’s creation. Nature did not factor into Byzantine art, he told an audience, but “With the coming, however, of

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<sup>25</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer to Jim Sire. May 13, 1976. Francis and Edith Schaeffer Papers, 1968-1999. Sub-Series 5: Secondary, Box 3, Folder 11. Wheaton College Archives (hereafter cited as WCA).

<sup>26</sup> Francis Schaeffer, “The Christian and Nature,” Lecture, David Winter, ed., St. Louis, 1968. Francis and Edith Schaeffer Papers, 1968-1999. Sub-Sub-Series 2: Contributions, Box 1, Folder 6. WCA.

(Thomas) Aquinas,” the relationship with nature changed and, “began to have her proper place... beginning with Giotto you find a re-emphasis, a more proper emphasis that nature is good.”<sup>27</sup> Schaeffer stated that nature’s proper place was not to be lowered to where it does not factor into humanity’s worldview, but it also must not become so important it shares the same plain with mankind. Christians, he said, along with the secular world, had misplaced the value of God’s world in their lives and that problem must be rectified.

While lecturing in 1968 Schaeffer speculated that maybe in fifteen years the need to protect the planet would become an important national issue and he hoped Christians would be those already on the frontlines.<sup>28</sup> His prediction however, came true just two years later when the first Earth Day observance ushered in the modern environmental movement. The development was probably quite pleasing to Schaeffer because his lectures on ecology had just been turned into a book titled *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology*.

If *Pollution and the Death of Man* is placed alongside his other publications of the time, Schaeffer’s environmental argument was not necessarily making nature protection a top issue. Rather, it provided further support for the God/human hierarchical relationship, which he consistently promoted in his other books. Schaeffer’s larger focus was saving human souls and teaching Christians the basis for effectively living their faith and fulfilling the meaning of life. *Pollution and the Death of Man* was

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

a somewhat complicated exploration into the place of the natural world that was otherwise a footnote within his larger philosophical and theological arguments.<sup>29</sup>

Although *Pollution and the Death of Man* was not the strongest approach Schaeffer might have taken to encourage Christians to protect nature, it was a first step to motivate an otherwise silent church (as Schaeffer accused Christians of being) to begin thinking about the health of God's natural world. After the popular Earth Day observance on April 22, 1970, many other conservative Protestants wanted to get their community involved and to participate at the very least in a movement parallel to the secular environmentalists. The most popular conservative Protestant magazines, *Decision*, *Christianity Today*, *Moody Monthly*, *Evangelical Action*, and *Eternity*, jumped on the bandwagon and urged their Christian readers to save God's earth as a top priority.

*Eternity* magazine, for example, devoted an entire issue to ecological awareness in its May 1970 edition, with a cover photo depicting a pristine mountain lake with discarded beer cans in the foreground and a caption asking: "WHAT ARE WE DOING TO GOD'S EARTH?" The feature story in this issue was titled "When You've Seen One Beer Can You've Seen Them All" by Ron Widman, who described his disappointment upon seeing littered beer cans during a trip to the Yosemite Valley. Widman inquired of the reader "Does the elimination of the brown pelican from our shores through the indiscriminate use of the 'miracle insecticide' DDT reflect God's

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<sup>29</sup> In Schaeffer's other books, such as *Escape from Reason*, nature makes an appearance in his diagrams and explanations of the proper God/human or supernatural/natural relationship. It once again appeared in his very popular book and film documentary *How Should We Then Live*, released in the later 1970s. But again, in these publications the natural world only merited a mention.

love? Does the bite of a chain-saw into the flesh of a towering 2000-year-old redwood prove His majesty?”<sup>30</sup> He listed man’s sins against nature such as producing carbon monoxide, the recent fire on the Cuyahoga River, the over-use of Minnesota’s Superior National Forest, and the somewhat comical occurrence of the Royal Air Force having to parachute cats into Malaysia in hopes of controlling disease-carrying rodents who had proliferated because the indigenous cats had died from eating DDT-ridden cockroaches.<sup>31</sup>

Echoing Schaeffer’s criticisms, Widman noted that Christian churches had not previously adopted policies of ecological responsibility. He supported Christian eco-friendly activity with biblical verses and listed actions that Christians could take on the individual level, such as teaching children how to be conscientious stewards by conserving resources and not polluting. He also raised the issue of how economics plays a key role in environmentalism. Widman admitted in his conclusion that being ecologically responsible might cost more money, but added “After all, we are the ones who stand to gain the most: clean air, clean water, open spaces. Why shouldn’t we pay?”<sup>32</sup>

In another strong pro-environmental conservative Protestant example, three days after the official Earth Day observance, long-time pastor Leighton Ford delivered an Earth Day sermon during his brother-in-law Billy Graham’s weekly radio show “Hour of

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<sup>30</sup> Ron Widman, “When You’ve Seen One Beer Can You’ve Seen Them All,” *Eternity* 21, no. 5 (May 1970): 16.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 29.



Decision.”<sup>33</sup> The program opened with the familiar tone of Cliff Barrows voice announcing “The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association presents the ‘Hour of Decision.’” A choir sang “Then sings my soul, my savior God to thee, how great Thou art! How great Thou art!” and after a few more formalities the nineteenth century hymn, “For the Beauty of the Earth.” after which Ford spoke on “Good Earth or Polluted Planet?”

Ford delivered a strong pro-environmental Christian message. He grabbed the listener’s attention by telling the story of a boy who was given a garden and told to take care of it. The boy instead spoiled what he was given by dirtying the water, cutting down trees and polluting the air so much he could not see the sun. Ford reported he told this story to his children, who replied that the boy had sinned by polluting. “Polluting” Ford told his radio audience, was a new term to his generation, but abusing the earth is what society was doing and that must change. Like Schaeffer, Ford explained the proper God/human/nature relationship, but in a simple, straight-forward way. “Yes God has put the earth under our dominion but that does not mean that man is the sovereign lord. This earth is not our earth it is God’s earth. We are not using our things, we are using the

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<sup>33</sup> “The Hour of Decision,” still broadcast today, is a thirty-minute Christian radio show that was begun in 1950 by the world-famous evangelist Billy Graham. Since the beginning of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 1934, the federal government has asked radio stations to set aside a few hours each week for public service broadcasting. Many pastors took advantage of this free radio time and put their sermons on the radio.

talents and gifts God has given to us. We are to have dominion, but under God's domain."<sup>34</sup>

It is clear from the beginning of his sermon that Ford was not simply saying humanity needed to live responsibly and curb the usage of DDT or stop polluting for the health of people and animals. Instead, in an attempt to motivate his listeners into environmental action, he articulated man's superior but humble place in creation, a view in harmony with what Schaeffer had been arguing for years. Ford contended that although clearly man has dominion of the earth, people are only caretakers. By asserting that humans have an obligation to God to care for the earth, Ford was utilizing the Christian environmental argument known as "stewardship," which essentially means being a custodian. The idea of stewardship within conservative Protestant culture can be applied to a variety of situations, any of which involve a responsibility to care for something. Pastors frequently speak on the idea of stewardship, for example, when it comes to church tithing or volunteering one's time for the upkeep of church grounds and buildings. Bible verses such as Leviticus 27:30-32, Mark 10:17-25, and Romans 12:1 are commonly cited to support this practice. Stewardship was a primary strategy many pastors turned to at the time for inducing their conservative Protestant listeners to tithe and donate their services. It did not imply something Christians should simply do to be good people, but rather stewardship implied a commandment by God. By seizing this approach, Ford made stewardship of the earth a religious edict.

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<sup>34</sup> Leighton Ford, Good Earth or Polluted Planet, *Hour of Decision*, April 1970, BBEA: Records of the Hour of Decision Radio Program, Collection 191, T1059a, b. Billy Graham Center Archives (hereafter cited as BGCA).

It was through stewardship that Leighton Ford hoped conservative Protestants would see how the natural world fit into their lives as Christians instead of regarding the environmental movement as something outside of their faith and an earthly problem for the secular world. In addition to stewardship, Ford knew he had to connect his environmental argument to the most important spiritual need, saving souls. Thus, to keep in tune with the expectations of his discerning religious audience, Ford skillfully mixed stewardship of nature with the spiritual struggle of people trying to de-pollute their souls through the process of accepting Christ as their savior. “Like those ducks drenched in oil from the tanker on St. Petersburg, our sins defile us.” He continued, “We need a spiritual detergent to cleanse our souls and that is why Jesus shed his blood. The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s son cleanses us from every sin. Faith in that blood and the living Christ can restore us to the fellowship of God, lead us to repentance and motivate us to clean up the mess that we find our world in.”<sup>35</sup> The primary point of the “Hour of Decision” was to save listeners for Christ. Ford knew from the beginning that he was taking on a topic unfamiliar to his discerning audience and one he had to validate to sell. Therefore, he chose to undergird his sermon with saving souls while making stewardship a commandment from God.

Ford surely thought he had effectively molded a successful and inspiring Christian Earth Day message for his listeners. He concluded his sermon as a cavalry bugler sending troops out for battle. Notice that his rhetoric still highlighted the themes of stewardship and saving souls: “Will it [Earth Day] stand for ego, estrangement, and

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

exploitation?” he asked. “Or will E-Day stand for...’entrust’ that God has entrusted to us this world ,‘economize’ the careful management of our environment and ‘evangelize’ the good news of the greatest cleansing of all, that Jesus Christ can bring?”<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, like Ford’s sermon, many of the messages from popular conservative Protestant magazines were very pro-environmental and made protecting the environment an issue that Christians, as good moral Americans, should get in on. Ford’s message was moving, well thought out, energetic and a step up from Schaeffer’s more rarified philosophies. Nevertheless, the rhetoric never quite made it to the next step of agreed-upon cohesive action by the community. There were obstacles that caused the discussion to stagnate. Interestingly, one of the problems could be witnessed in an advertisement preceding Ford’s powerful Earth Day sermon – that is, conservative Protestant concern about the growing counterculture among America’s youth. Just before introducing Ford, the “Hour of Decision” announcer promoted an article that Billy Graham wrote for *Decision* magazine titled “On the Brink.” Its topic was the “new radical revolution that is sweeping through many university campuses throughout our world today.”<sup>37</sup> This problem, not the health of nature, seemed paramount in Graham’s eyes and perhaps his concern was justified. The secular environmental movement’s college-age organizers had just replaced the blame for the ecological crisis on the shoulders of the unfocused but enthusiastic Christian community.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

## The Environmental Handbook

Several months before Earth Day, the event's organizers published *The Environmental Handbook: Prepared for the First National Environmental Teach-In*. *The Environmental Handbook* was to be, as the title states, a guidebook for those leading and participating in educating America on the ecological crisis. It virtually served as the first official manifesto of the environmental movement.

*The Handbook* promoted several ideas considered radical at the time for fighting the problem of overpopulation. Garrett Hardin, author of the chapter titled "The Tragedy of the Commons," condemned the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights for supporting the freedom of couples to decide the number of children they wish to have. Instead, he urged concerned citizens to support Planned Parenthood to pressure the burgeoning world population into seeing the error of their ways.<sup>38</sup> Hardin suggested that reproductive freedoms should be curbed because overpopulation was a major cause of environmental degradation.<sup>39</sup> This issue was a recurring theme throughout the book and was picked up again by the editor, Garrett De Bell, who offered a number of solutions for looming environmental problems in his chapter on political action. De Bell proposed that government should offer "massive" federal aid for contraceptives as well

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<sup>38</sup> Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," in Garrett De Bell ed. *The Environmental Handbook: Prepared for the First National Environmental Teach-In* (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1970): 42. The pressure of zero population growth angered some conservative Christians who believed that people have a right to choose how many children they want.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 49

as sex education for all levels.<sup>40</sup> This latter proposal would rub conservative Protestants the wrong way once sex education was offered in public schools and it quickly became a hotly contested issue. Worst of all, the authors constructed what they felt should be the proper or sustainable human/nature relationship. They broached this topic by reprinting in the *Handbook* Lynn White's 1967 essay in order to show what philosophies not to follow. Its reappearance resulted in forcing the issue of Christian culpability back into popular debate.

As an alternative to Christianity, the book included a chapter by Keith Murray of the Berkeley Ecology Center, who praised a host of what he believed were nature-friendly faiths and ignored Christianity, the most popular faith in the United States.

“It seems evident that there are throughout the world certain social and religious forces which have worked through history toward an ecologically and culturally enlightened state of affairs. Let these be encouraged: Gnostics, hip Marxists, Teilhard de Chardin Catholics, Druids, Taoists, Biologists, Zens, Shamans, Bushmen, American Indians, Polynesians, Anarchists, Alchemists...the list is long. All primitive cultures, all communal and ashram movements.”<sup>41</sup>

The *Environmental Handbook* as a whole presented many uncontroversial solutions and raised awareness of real ecological problems. For example, the authors urged Americans to take it upon themselves to clean up trash that other irresponsible

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<sup>40</sup> Garrett De Bell ed., *The Environmental Handbook: Prepared for the First National Environmental Teach-In* (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc. 1970), 318.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

people left behind. Still, despite mostly non-contentious suggestions, the book proved to be a wedge that forced conservative Protestants away from the environmental movement. Perhaps De Bell was looking for a scapegoat or straw man on which Americans could place guilt for their ecological woes, or maybe he just lacked the interpersonal social skills to promote unity. In any case, the addition of problematic elements in the *Environmental Handbook* proved to be a defining moment when the secular environmental movement officially approved rejection of the cautious but willing conservative Protestant community. Besides trying to promote the obligation of stewardship, conservative Protestant leaders once again had to set aside time to fight the specter of White's article.

Harold Lindsell, the fundamentalist editor of *Christianity Today*, took immediate exception to the seemingly blatant anti-Christian message in the *Handbook*. Lindsell, an ordained Baptist minister who taught at the Fuller Theological Seminary, authored a variety of Christian books and was editor of *Christianity Today* from the mid-1960s to 1978. His best-known book, *The Battle for the Bible*, argued for the infallibility of the scriptures. Like Francis Schaeffer, Lindsell was considered a prolific intellectual fundamentalist who helped Christians understand the Bible and live accordingly in a modern world.

After reading the *Environmental Handbook*, Lindsell would have no part of the secular ecological movement and accused it of worshipping the earth. In the April 10, 1970 issue of *Christianity Today* he lashed out at the *Handbook's* authors in his article, "Ecologism: A New Paganism." Lindsell wrote, "Unfortunately, at least a few persons

appear to have gone beyond legitimate concern for our environment to pervert the science of ecology into what might be called ecologism.” In other words, he was not against environmental protection, but interpreted the secular environmental movement as upsetting or “perverting” the place of nature in God’s hierarchy by worshipping it. “These people are uninhibited in their opposition to orthodox Christianity (as well as to such derivatives as humanism and Communism), and to replace it they urge what is essentially old-fashioned paganism.”<sup>42</sup> Lindsell continued with his diatribe by directly quoting from Keith Murray’s chapter, hoping it would drive home his point regarding the link between nature worship and the secular environmental movement, not to mention highlight the anti-Christian attitude coming from the Earth Day organizers.

In the May 8, 1970 issue of *Christianity Today*, Lindsell once again felt compelled to address the faith controversies within environmentalism. In his article “De-Polluting Ecology,” he criticized nature worship while warning Christians they must not get involved with the political side of ecology as it could divide people within their faith. His unease with the secular environmental movement was evident in the introduction. “Non-biblical theologizers have thrust before us a new view of man that makes him a part, rather than lord, of the created order. Those who urge less human assertiveness over nature fail to understand (or apply) Genesis.”<sup>43</sup> *Eternity* editor Russel T. Hitt took up these same themes in the June issue of *Eternity* magazine with his article, “The New Pantheism.”

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<sup>42</sup> Harold Lindsell, “Ecologism: A New Paganism,” *Christianity Today* XIV, no. 14, (April 10, 1970): 33.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.



Lindsell proved very supportive of environmental protection, if not for the Earth Day organizers' caustic approach towards Christianity, in another article written during the same period, most likely just before he saw the *Environmental Handbook*. In the spring 1970 issue of the Christian journal, *Evangelical Action*, Lindsell's nature views were remarkably different. In "Suicide Ahead" Lindsell explained the different ways humanity was heading towards destruction. The first in his list of problems was "Ecological Suicide." "Let me illustrate this," he wrote, "We have polluted the atmosphere.... I suggest you read Rachel Carson's book, *The Silent Spring*.... We have exploited and raped nature.... We have not only subdued and corrupted it and, if we continue at the rate we are going, the planet will shortly be uninhabitable."<sup>44</sup> In this article, Lindsell did not feel the need to dedicate any time to trying to distance or criticize the environmental movement. In short, the near anti-Christian approach by the Earth Day organizers and authors of the *Environmental Handbook* sent Lindsell in the opposite direction. He subsequently used his position as editor of one of the most popular conservative Protestant magazines to reject the secular environmental movement at the same time he continued to quietly promote the ideology of Christian environmental stewardship, a view he promoted throughout most of the 1970s.<sup>45</sup>

Garret DeBell and the others who put together the *Environmental Handbook* were not the first to suggest that nature worship was the key to a healthier planet. Schaeffer had briefly discussed this issue in his book *Pollution and the Death of Man*

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>45</sup> Lindsell's compassion for nature began to evolve around 1978. This change will be covered in Chapter Three.

when quoting Richard L. Means, professor of sociology at the College of Kalamazoo.<sup>46</sup> Other Christian writers worried that Lynn White's alternative of following the nature-friendly philosophies of St. Francis of Assisi were also too close to nature worship. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the modern environmental movement, the most conservative of Protestants never entirely rejected or dismissed the need to protect the earth. Even the extreme conservative Protestant and one-time colleague of Schaeffer, Carl McIntire, responded to Earth Day in his own newsletter, *The Christian Beacon*.

Carl McIntire remains famous today as a fundamentalist preacher who was such a militant separatist that he even alienated himself from his own organizations. He had a constant need to be in charge and any challenge from fellow members sent him into self-exile. McIntire was one of the first fundamentalists to whole-heartedly throw his religious faith together with present-day politics. His desire to separate himself from worldly enemies made him more than ineffective politically, but his views to a certain extent stand as solid precursors to the more public-friendly political Christian groups such as the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition. Thus, his views on environmentalism are important to take into consideration rather than simply dismiss as the ramblings of the extreme fringe.

In McIntire's June 17, 1971 issue of *Christian Beacon*, the featured cover story was titled ECOLOGY ANTI-CHRISTIAN. The article reflects the fact conservative Protestants did not have control of the vision to protect nature, but felt under attack.

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<sup>46</sup> "Why not begin to find a solution to this [the ecological crisis] in the direction of Pantheism?" Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970), 14.

Instead of taking shots at the *Environmental Handbook*, McIntire raised similar concerns within the conservative Protestant community with respect to secular environmentalists blaming Christianity. He cited Edward B. Fiske, a United Presbyterian minister, who reportedly lauded Buddhists and Taoists as having a better relationship to nature than Christians. McIntire also found problems with the secular environmental movement for leaving nature protection up to the central government and instead asserted that the issue should be for individuals to tackle. He stated that the ecological crisis was overblown but nevertheless acknowledged something needed to be done. He wrote “...simply...there are areas that need to be cleaned up. There are some streams that have been polluted by the discharge of factories. There are cities, some of them, that need to give attention to this problem.”<sup>47</sup> However, the vast majority of the article struggled with the secular environmental movement’s need to promote other religions that are more eco-friendly and especially with their solution, which looked towards the government to handle the problem. Like Lindsell, Carl McIntire became upset that others were promoting alternative faiths as “good” eco-friendly religions over that of Christianity. He then paired this problem with his partiality toward limited government to discredit the environmental movement, but only up to a point. He still admitted that something had to be done to clean up pollution. Interestingly, he never raised the question that Schaeffer posited in *Pollution and the Death of Man*: what is humanity’s proper relationship to God’s earth? Should humanity work in harmony with nature or did

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<sup>47</sup> Carl McIntire, “Ecology Anti-Christian,” *Christian Beacon* 36, no. 19 (June 17, 1971): 1-2.

God give natural resources to humanity to utilize at will? McIntire did not answer these questions, which strongly suggests he had no problem with the need to care for the environment in a compassionate way and did not see any reason to argue against the environmental movement's goal of preserving the earth.

Two years after the initial excitement for advancing a Christian environmental stewardship movement, conservative Protestant rhetoric about protecting the earth changed further. Although the "Hour of Decision" featured Leighton Ford's eco-friendly sermon in 1970, Billy Graham told the public on the same show in 1972 what he himself thought of environmentalism. He dismissed the issue by saying the pollution he dealt with as a child was worse than it was in the present day. His argument paralleled McIntire's antipathy toward government regulation of pollution, but broke with him by totally rejecting the need for ecological action and the need to control man's impact on the environment. When recalling his childhood in North Carolina, Graham said his father's farm was "full of pollution" but that they took care of their own problems and did not call on the government to fix them.<sup>48</sup> Instead of calling on his listeners to practice Christian stewardship, Graham accused the younger American generation of always complaining about something and criticized their inability to clean up their own messes. Thus, Graham rejected the belief that an ecological crisis existed, negating any need for Christian environmental stewardship and instead blamed the younger generation for social problems, which his show the "Hour of Decision" had also alluded

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<sup>48</sup> Billy Graham, "The Generation Gap." Billy Graham, as heard on *The Hour of Decision*, 1972, loose pamphlets, BGCA.

to before Ford delivered his Earth Day sermon. This observation provides a glance into growing conservative Protestant concern about the counterculture's social movements that percolated throughout this time in mainstream American culture and would become a bigger issue for conservative Protestants as the decade wore on.

In line with Graham's view of the ecological crisis, *Christianity Today* published an article the same year questioning the reality of the failing environment. The author James M. Houston mentioned that politicians think it's real but voices from "experts" suggest that there is no problem at all. He then listed and described five warnings all Christians must take into consideration before becoming a part of the environmental movement. These included questioning just how overblown problems are, being aware of the people who blame Christians for the ecological problems, and understanding the pitfalls of worshipping nature. He concluded with a message to be cautious of the solutions offered by experts.<sup>49</sup>

By the energy crisis in 1973 the push by cheerleaders like Schaeffer and Ford to save the environment had died down, but this did not completely douse related reasons to respect the earth. New motivations arose to conserve resources, but these were more along the lines of being good citizens and non-gluttons rather than an emotional appeal to protect earth as God's creation.

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<sup>49</sup> James Houston, "The Environmental Movement: Five Causes of Confusion," *Christianity Today* 16, no. 24 (1972): 1130-32.

## The Energy Crisis

It was mid-October 1973 when Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) protested U.S. support of Israel by cutting back on oil exports and soon thereafter halted all oil shipments to the United States. OPEC had found the Achilles heel of what was considered at the time to be the world's strongest country economically and militarily.

U.S. citizens were shocked when the energy that had always seemed plentiful and cheap became in short supply. On November 7, 1973 President Nixon addressed the populace informing them of his administration's plan to deal with the crisis. He stated that oil-run power plants would be converting to use coal and the federal government and military would begin rationing fuel. Nixon assured his listeners that in the long run they would achieve energy independence from OPEC, but in the short term everyone must conserve. He called on states and officials on the local level to encourage carpooling and reduce speed limits.<sup>50</sup>

The impact of the energy crisis left Americans feeling like they were being held hostage by the oil barons of the Middle East. As the price of gas rose and the amount allocated for each customer was set, it was common to see lines of cars at gas stations. People naturally did not like the energy limitations, but at the same time many began to comprehend the reality of earth's finite resources while questioning American

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<sup>50</sup> Richard Nixon "The Energy Emergency," in *The Oil Crisis of 1973-1974: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Karen R. Merrill (Boston and New York, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007), 66-71.

consumerism. President Nixon was one of millions, including conservative Christians, who began to reevaluate the latter quandary. In his November 7, 1973 speech Nixon said, "...the average American will consume as much energy in the next 7 days as most other people in the world will consume in an entire year. We have only 6 percent of the world's people in America, but we consume over 30 percent of all the energy in the world."<sup>51</sup>

A few months before OPEC decreased imported oil, articles began circulating throughout Christian magazines calling for a reduction in American gluttony and waste. In May of 1973 *Christianity Today* writer Addison H. Leitch wrote an article titled "Without Natural Affection." Leitch warned Christians of the waning interest in the environment by stating that although teenagers might be in the local news for their recycling efforts, the addition of an annual 12 million cars to the roads, the endless production of plastics, and the unseen consequences of food additives overwhelmed eco-friendly efforts. Leitch called for Christians to remove themselves from this wasteful, earthly consumer culture, firmly declaring, "The GNP is not God; it sounds more like the service of mammon."<sup>52</sup>

Various other articles filled the pages of conservative Protestant publications during the energy crisis, but this religious community went beyond rhetoric to actually

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>52</sup> Addison H. Leitch, "Without Natural Affection," *Christianity Today* 17, no. 16 (May 11, 1973): 50.

implement energy-saving changes in their lives.<sup>53</sup> In the December 21, 1973 issue of *Christianity Today*, author Barrie Doyle gave perhaps the most telling reflection of how the energy crisis impacted conservative Christian lives through his article “Energy Crisis: Bleakness or Blessing?” In the introduction he quoted several pastors who felt the energy crisis was resulting in more people coming to Church rather than taking the day off to participate in recreational activities. He stated that in response to President Nixon’s recommendation, churches such as First Baptist Church of Van Nuys, California had formed an energy conservation committee, and all the churches surveyed by *Christianity Today* reported they were doing likewise, taking action by turning down thermostats below seventy degrees, imposing speed limits on church vehicles, and turning off unused lights.<sup>54</sup> Future religious right co-founder Jerry Falwell’s 13,000 member Thomas Road Baptist Church of Lynchburg, Virginia reported it cut gasoline consumption by 28% and thereby saved 6,000 gallons while predicting greater savings in the future.<sup>55</sup>

Doyle continued to report that some pastors gave sermons on ethics in response to the shortages. Fundamentalist W. A. Criswell’s First Baptist Church in Dallas sent energy conservation guidelines to members and the Moody Church in Chicago issued a “manifesto” to the congregation asking for priorities in energy conservation. Pastor

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<sup>53</sup> Other articles include: John Crawford, “Christ and Your Living Standard,” *Eternity* 24, no. 11 (November 1973): 15. Harold Lindsell, “Living Better with Less,” *Christianity Today* 17, no. 15 (April 26, 1974): 28.

<sup>54</sup> Barrie Doyle, “Energy Crisis Bleakness or Blessing?,” *Christianity Today* 18, no. 6 (December 21, 1973): 33.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.



Robert Schuller of Garden Grove Community Church in Garden Grove, California was quoted saying “I believe America is shot full of waste. We’re an undisciplined and profligate people. We waste gas, money and time.”<sup>56</sup> In the same issue, the magazine’s editor offered ideas on how churches could reduce their consumption of the nation’s depleted energy resources. He urged congregation members to walk to church and begin holding services in nearby homes instead of distant churches. Neighbors should organize carpools while kindly encouraging each other to shut off lights, which might be annoying, but would be a better alternative than government-mandated controls.

In addition to the actions described in the December 21st edition of *Christianity Today*, an organization named The Christian Stewardship Council, formed in 1975, produced “A Code of Ethical Pursuit.” The goal of this committee was to help conservative Protestants sort out “worthy evangelical enterprises from those that were “financially negligent and exploitative.”<sup>57</sup> This group apparently was only short-lived, but it does show a concerted effort to change lifestyles and cut down on waste. These communal efforts among conservative Christians seem to have been ephemeral or at least something that did not stay in the headlines for long. During most of the 1970s, the bulk of the efforts to cut back on energy consumption proved something conservative Protestants cared about and participated in. Beyond saving money, they wanted to be model citizens and wanted to do their part. Perhaps if the environmental movement had presented their goals in a similar manner, conservative Protestants would have joined in.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Harold Lindsell, “Waste as a Wrong,” *Christianity Today* 19, no. 14 (April 11, 1975): 26.

The theological argument regarding humans as “dominators” of the earth was certainly not the reason evangelicals and fundamentalists failed to participate in the goal for a healthier planet.

## Conclusion

Contrary to previous understandings, conservative Protestants, including those who would become players in the religious right, did not sway their followers to disregard the ecological crisis because nature was a resource for humanity’s use. Instead, they were introduced to the issue before Earth Day by accusations leveled by Lynn White that their faith was the reason for a dying environment. In response, leaders like Schaeffer took to the lecture circuit and tried to energize fellow Christians into being environmental stewards and this cause was magnified by others like Ford who used Earth Day as a platform to get the eco-friendly message out. Nevertheless, the attempt was subdued by those who organized Earth Day. The anti-Christian messages stemming from the *Environmental Handbook* kept the conservative Protestant community from controlling the conversation concerning efforts to protect nature. Their time was spent in a defensive position, which left opinions mixed and unfocused.

Harold Lindsell is a direct example of someone who praised Rachel Carson just before becoming quite upset on learning about the environmental movement’s attitude towards Christianity and their approach to understanding the natural world. But even with these problems, conservative political and religious extremist Carl McIntire did not

dismiss caring for nature because humanity was ordained as the earth's absolute rulers. Instead, like Lindsell, he fought the idea that other religions were better for the earth and disagreed with government regulation all while admitting that pollution was a problem that needed addressing.

Billy Graham's refusal to believe the environment was in danger seems the beginning of the end for the conservative Protestant push to initiate a parallel environmental movement through Christian environmental stewardship. By this time, the idea had come under too much fire, whether it was through Schaeffer's subdued and complicated philosophy describing nature's secondary but important "proper place," or Lindsell warning that the environmental movement promoted nature worship. Graham's views also reflected how uncomfortable conservative Protestants were with the looming counterculture that was challenging Christianity's hegemony and cultural norms in American society. Results from a *Gallup Poll* reflected that the challenge was significant, reporting a sharp shift in views of religion from 1957 to 1970. The poll explained in 1957 (when the *Gallup Poll* began) that 69% of Americans felt that religion was increasing in influence and only 14% felt that it was declining. However, as the decade ended and the 1960s began, the two perceptions sharply switched positions. By 1970, they were almost opposite what they once had been, with 75% of Americans saying religion was losing influence and only 14% saying it was gaining.<sup>58</sup> Thus, it was

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<sup>58</sup> Lydia Saad, "Americans Believe Religion is Losing Clout," *Gallup* (December 23, 2008). <http://www.gallup.com/poll/113533/Americans-Believe-Religion-Losing-Clout.aspx> (accessed October 12, 2009).

not hard for Christians to feel pressured by changing currents during the 1970s, and this went beyond environmentalists blaming Christians for ruining the earth.

Outside of the Christian publishing world, it is hard to tell just how much the message of Christian environmental stewardship actually reached conservative Protestant churches on Sunday mornings. Many sermons at this early time were not recorded or else have become lost. Adrian Rogers, the pastor of the megachurch Bellevue Baptist Church located in Memphis, Tennessee and two-time president of the Southern Baptist Convention, reportedly delivered a sermon in 1973 titled the “Theology of Ecology.” The contents of his sermon unfortunately were lost and the rhetoric on conservative Protestant environmentalism was far too mixed in their community to take a firm guess as to what his view of the issue was. However, as previously discussed, Harold Lindsell’s articles in which he uses the term “ecology theology” suggest that Rogers might have read his work and advised congregation members not to partake in the nature-worshipping ideas of the secular environmental movement. On the other hand, writer Fred P. Thompson Jr. argued in the conservative publication *Evangelical Action* for the development of a nature-friendly Christian “theology of ecology,” and others such as Richard T. Wright made similar requests.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, most likely Rogers advocated something close to what Carl McIntire articulated in his 1971 article in which he admitted environmental problems existed and something needed to be done because this is God’s earth, but warned that Christians should always be wary of nature

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<sup>59</sup> Richard T. Wright, “Responsibility for the Ecological Crisis,” *BioScience*, 20, No 15 (Aug 1, 1970): 851-853.; Fred P. Thompson Jr. untitled editorial, *Evangelical Action* (Fall 1970): 35.

worship and big government. Like McIntire, Rogers probably subscribed to the idea that environmental protection was up to the individual, and like Graham, Rogers most likely felt there were larger, more pressing problems in society regarding the counterculture progressive movements. Today the 30,000 member Bellevue Baptist Church does not recycle, which suggests that they never did nor did they take any collective environmental action even if Rogers suggested it.

As the 1970s wore on, the issue of the environment dwindled in the conservative Protestant world despite the 1973 energy crisis. There were, of course, a handful of articles sporadically published throughout the decade asking readers to participate and wondering why the Christian community apparently did not care.<sup>60</sup> The ever-declining number of articles dedicated to the issue of environmentalism/ecology in *Christianity Today* speaks to the disappearance of the topic. See TABLE 1 Declining Environmental Interest.

TABLE 1 Declining Environmental Interest

October 10, 1969 - Sept 25, 1970,	Sept 24, 1971	Oct 13, 1972 – Sept 28, 1973	Oct 12, 1973 – Sept 27, 1974	October 11, 1974-Sept 26, 1975	Oct 8, 1976 – Sept 23, 1977
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<sup>60</sup> As theology Ph.D. candidate David Larsen notes in his dissertation *God's Gardeners*, articles continued to be published, although in smaller numbers throughout the 1970s, questioning why Christians had not taken collective action to save God's Earth. Elva McAllaster in her 1972 *Christianity Today* article, "The Day God Gave Job an Ecological Lesson" wondered why evangelicals left caring for the earth up to the Sierra Club. At the same time she asked Christians this question, she diligently tried to energize them into action. Wheaton College anthropology professor Marvin Mayers tried to do the same thing in his article "Ecology in the Old Testament."

Ecology: 5	Environmental Crisis: 1 Ecology: 6	Energy Crisis: 1 Ecology: 1	Ecology: 5 Energy Crisis: 5	Ecology: 1	Environment/ ecology: 0
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This information was compiled from the number of articles under the index headings found in the bound annual periodical volumes of *Christianity Today*.

Indeed, enthusiasm towards Christian environmental stewardship slowly withered as a top issue among the conservative Protestant community but it never entirely died out nor was it relegated to the background where article writers sometimes complained that nothing was being done. Instead, the issue stayed alive but in different forms. As will be explained in following chapters, the natural world as well as Schaeffer's understanding of humanity's "proper place" in God's creation made the transition to fighting the beginnings of the culture war. This was the same war that Billy Graham alluded to, as evidenced by his concern that the revolution on college campuses needed addressing before trying to preserve the earth.

## CHAPTER IV

### HUMANITY'S PROPER PLACE

Although the first two decades after World War II were not devoid of unnerving issues such as the atomic bomb or the communist threat, the late 1960s and early 1970s ushered in unsettling and rapid social changes within America's mainstream culture. Vietnam War protests, the drug culture, new contentious laws regarding racial equality, gay rights and the women's liberation movement brought increased feelings of instability. There were those who embraced the changes, while some did nothing at all. Others tried to figure out ways to regain control and return to "normalcy." Conservative Protestants took the latter approach by theologically explaining the developments and devised a game plan to take control of the future. Their response primarily assumed two forms: biblical apocalyptic predictions and a formula to realize near perfection here on earth. The idea of nature and a definition of what is "natural" played a major role in both views.

With regard to the apocalypse, conservative Protestants, particularly fundamentalists, expected to experience the end of the world as we know it through the ever-imminent Second Coming of Christ outlined in the Bible. As premillennialists, they believed problems on earth would grow progressively worse until Jesus returned, marking the "rapture" in which all saved Christians would, in the "twinkling of an eye,"

physically ascend to Heaven.<sup>61</sup> During this process, the deceased in cemeteries and even those decomposed in oceans would rematerialize and join the living believers on their journey to Paradise. There is much more to this belief, but the applicable information is that people in the present are living with a looming doomsday clock, and as it runs down all aspects of life, including spiritual, moral and physical, will never improve but will devolve to a tipping point when the Lord shall return. Thus, all the “bad” news in the tumultuous late 1960s and 1970s could be explained as further confirmation of biblical prophecy.

This apocalyptic prediction existed long before the late 1960s and 1970s. During the twentieth century alone, fundamentalists became intrigued with the unfolding of World War I and II and went about trying to fit the current events with their end-of-the-world narrative. One theory, for example, held that fascist Italian leader Mussolini was the Anti-Christ. Later, the development of the nuclear bomb functioned as the possible method by which the world would one day be destroyed by fire. Likewise, the rapid social changes of the late 1960’s set the stage once more for further apocalyptic speculation as evidenced by Christian author Hal Lindsey who tried to make sense of the world through his book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. By 1980 it had sold ten million copies, making it one of the top sellers of the decade.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” 1 Corinthians 16: 52 (King James Version).

<sup>62</sup> Hal Lindsey and C.C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), front cover of the 1981 eighty-seventh printing.



In the introduction, Lindsey first questioned readers' faith in the most learned of mankind, asking "Has the academic community found the answers?"<sup>63</sup> He then continued to capture the attention of his readers by highlighting the shortcomings of fallible and untrustworthy academic experts and politicians. "Throughout history we have seen impressive strides taken by men who were stepping ahead of their time. We have seen reforms advanced from ideas generated by men of vision. And yet governments change, men falter and fall.... In this book I am attempting to step aside and let the prophets speak."<sup>64</sup>

Lindsey described how Europe would slowly become the world's leading superpower, the United States would continue its self-destructive steady decline, and the militarily strong Soviet Union would trigger Jesus' triumphant return when it attacked Israel. Perhaps the most important statement Lindsey made was connecting Jesus' parable of the fig tree to the new state of Israel.<sup>65</sup> Using this parable, Lindsey speculated that within the first generation of the foundation of Israel Christ would return.<sup>66</sup>

Throughout the remainder of the book, Lindsey's outlook was grim: the United States would fall like Rome due to moral decay, peace was impossible, and the United

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. By using the term "prophets," Lindsey was drawing upon the conservative Christian belief that the Bible is infallible. To these believers, the human authors of the Bible were divinely inspired by God and therefore the word of God (the Bible) trumps all conclusions and findings by mankind.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 53. "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door" Matthew 24:32,33. (New American Standard Bible).

<sup>66</sup> Hal Lindsey and C.C. Carlson, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), 53-54.

Nations would continue in futility.<sup>67</sup> As Christians, he argued, we should live life to the fullest because time is short and the Lord will return soon.<sup>68</sup> Conservative Protestants welcomed such predictions. The New Testament foretold they would be spared the “tribulation” or the seven years that would follow after the return of Christ, who would take them to Heaven. The people then left on earth would have to face the Anti-Christ for seven years until Christ comes a third time and restores mankind and the world back to a perfect balance where even the lamb will live side by side with the lion.<sup>69</sup>

After examining Lindsey’s predictions and logic, it may be easy to speculate that because conservative Protestants believed the world was coming to an end, it would be acceptable to disregard the ecological crisis and pollute as much as necessary. This response to popular environmental concerns indeed existed in conservative Protestant rhetoric, but only surfaced intermittently and remained a weak and hypocritical approach to ecology. The conservative Protestant community could agree that the situation on earth would become increasingly worse, but believers were not comfortable with sitting on the sidelines to watch it go to ruin. Instead of complacency, they gained strength by getting upset about what they considered the moral decay of American society and resolved to reverse the problems. They believed that by solving the moral dilemma, all other problems would inevitably be remedied. This latter point is key to understanding the fuel behind the religious right.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 93, 146-147, 169.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>69</sup> “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.” Isaiah 65:25 (King James Version).

The 1970s were a decade in which conservative Protestants developed the motivations and philosophies that created the active and organized religious right movement led by Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority beginning in 1979. The late 1960s progressive movements upset them, but it was not until after the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that Falwell whole-heartedly embraced the idea of making politics a major point of his Sunday sermons as he began shaping this religious community into a force to "take back America." Falwell and those who shared similar visions sought to mold a structured philosophical solution for the current predicament. Thus, letting environmental challenges go unchecked because of the looming apocalypse ran counter to their desire to fix other earthly dilemmas. Even so, saving the natural world would not make it on their list of top priorities. It did however, remain firmly in the background as they conceived a different understanding of what they considered "natural" and placed this concept at the pinnacle of their increasingly growing social agenda to put the world right.

Conservative Protestant leaders who wanted a return to normalcy, explained contemporary problems by arguing that humanity had upset a natural relationship, one that was designed personally by God between Himself and mankind. Unlike the environmental movement, which clearly understood humanity as the destroyer of the natural world, conservative Protestants believed people were a part of creation and by returning society back to its God-ordained and thus "natural" hierarchical relationship with God, all world problems, including the ecological crisis, would be cured. In short, the conservative Protestant community challenged the late 1960s and 1970s social

movements, which they felt dismantled the God-ordained relationship between God and humanity and, in consequence, caused humanity to suffer as well as the natural world. They contended that if humanity behaved as God initially intended at the point of creation, then all aspects of life would be rewarded with health. Francis Schaeffer's concern for "humanity's proper place" served as a starting point in the conservative Protestant quest to preserve the earth from the looming apocalypse.

Francis Schaeffer expounded upon humanity's "proper place" in his books *Escape from Reason* and *the God Who is There*. He went even further in his late 1960s publication, *Death in the City*, which described the direction of contemporary society. Schaeffer argued the solution was to put God back into society's understanding as creator and supernatural absolute force. When this was accomplished, people would know the meaning of life and treat fellow humans and the natural world with respect because all things were created by God. By ignoring God, contemporary humans caused everything on the earth to decay. Many others in the conservative Protestant world shared similar outlooks with Schaeffer and made this point the primary focus of their messages to the Christian populace.

One of the most eloquent explanations of the supernatural conversation between God and humanity, in which all things are balanced, including the environment, was offered by *Christianity Today's* editor, fundamentalist Harold Lindsell, who wrote the 1970 article "Suicide Ahead?" featured in *United Evangelical Action*. Lindsell explained the reasons for the ecological crisis along with what the Christian community understood as disintegrating moral and ethical social norms as a consequence of

humanity turning its back on God. Lindsell explained, “We who are indebted to Scripture know that man is rooted and grounded in God. When God dies (due to abandoning faith), then man of necessity must also die.” The laws of the hierarchical relationship between God and humans, he continued, are universal and affect unbelievers as they do Christians. “If they [unbelievers] disregard or disobey those laws, which are intrinsic to God’s creation they still destroy themselves.”<sup>70</sup> This disconnection between God and mankind, Lindsell argued, explained the reason for all the turmoil in the world including being the direct cause for the ecological crisis.<sup>71</sup> To Lindsell, the secular environmentalists were on the wrong track by only blaming human indifference and greed for the degradation of the natural world. In agreement with Schaeffer, he argued the deeper cause was mankind, who upset the intended hierarchical relationship that humanity should have with God.

Lindsell described the breaking of the relationship as “perversion,” or “unnatural” and he supported such views through historical comparisons. He compared the U.S. to Rome and Greece, writing “When those nations [Rome and Greece] at last perverted and disobeyed those laws [of God as absolute creator], those cultures perished.” Like Schaeffer’s *Death in the City* and *Pollution and the Death of Man*, Lindsell blamed this upset hierarchy for causing problems among humanity and the various troubles that plague the natural world. He concluded “Man is cutting himself off

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<sup>70</sup> Harold Lindsell, “Suicide Ahead?,” *Evangelical Action* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1970): 13 - 14.

<sup>71</sup> One of the major consequences of mankind disobeying God, Lindsell wrote, was the ecological crisis. For more specific information see Chapter One, page 36.

from his Creator and he is also cutting himself off from God's creation by the abuse and disobedience of those laws which relate to God's creation under common grace."<sup>72</sup>

The solution to returning strength and stability to people's lives, according to those who took the initiative to form the later religious right movement, was through correcting humanity's proper place or the intended supernatural conversation between God and mankind. In other words, unlike the hopelessness that might come from an acceptance of an irrevocable apocalypse, the possibility of conservative Protestant believers actively returning society to its "natural" Christian relationship with God offered an answer to instability in all areas of life including those of family, church, nation and environment.

In 1981 televangelist Pat Robertson encouraged his followers to take part in the supernatural conversation with God through a language in which they could restore balance back to the world. He pinpointed the problem with the secular world by writing that it was trying to redefine what was "normal" and change laws that were divinely inspired. "...a new rule of law is emerging. No longer do judges seek to make decisions based on the Bible, the Constitution, natural law, or historic precedent...We have ceased to be a government of law and have become a government of men."<sup>73</sup> Robertson's comment regarding "a government of men" meant that secular society was trying to pervert God-ordained rules and replace them with artificial man-centered fabrications.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>73</sup> Pat Robertson, *Pat Robertson's Perspectives*, Christian Broadcasting Network, INC. Fall 1981: 5. Regent University Archives (hereafter cited as RUA).

Failing to heed God's laws, Robertson argued, encouraged punishments upon humanity, but people could bring society back to prosperity. "Nothing in Bible prophecy" he wrote, "forces us to believe that the United States must be drawn into the Antichrist system, or must of necessity taste the plagues reserved for those who unite against God. We have the choice of being a godly nation or of being humiliated and destroyed."<sup>74</sup> Other preachers also understood that beyond the destruction of society, God used the natural world to tell humanity how they were doing through natural disasters akin to the biblical story of Noah and the flood. Pastor and former Liberty College seminary student Jerry Johnson opened a sermon speaking out on the sins of America including homosexuality and pornography and then suggested that God would judge America as He did in the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah. To prove God had dispensed punishment on mankind since biblical times, Johnson told the story of Jacksonboro, Georgia. He reported that the town was full of sin and after the townsfolk rebuked a traveling preacher, God sent a flood to destroy the whole community.<sup>75</sup>

Jerry Falwell's sermons also depicted the world as being out of balance and he felt that it was his role as a religious leader to keep the nation from descending into destruction. Falwell told his congregation, "There is a spiritual dilemma in the land, the walls are down, the gates are burned with fire. Politically, socially, militarily, economically, that's the symbolism here. The nation is in disarray. In other words, the

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<sup>74</sup> Pat Robertson, *Pat Robertson's Perspectives*, Christian Broadcasting Network, INC. May 1981: 7. RUA.

<sup>75</sup> Guest Pastor Jerry Johnson, Untitled Sermon. Record Group 3: Old-Time Gospel Hour, Series 6: OTGH Transcripts 500's, Unit 5. Old Time Gospel Hour (OTGH) # 520. Liberty University Archives (hereafter cited as LUA).

land is sick, the people are spiritually defeated and the land is politically and military and economically down, hurting....”<sup>76</sup> The solution, Falwell believed, was through a spiritual rebirth, by society living within God’s guidelines and humanity returning to its proper place in God’s creation through the restoration of the fundamental building block of God’s creation – the Christian family.

### The Family

To understand the conservative Protestant view of humanity’s proper place in God’s creation, the first place to look is the structure of the Christian home. For members of this religious group, family structure and home life is the most basic and important creation made by God. Any other definition of the home is believed to be a deviation from God’s design and thus is deemed unnatural, perverted, and misguided. Jerry Falwell was one of the most ardent supporters of this belief and in short told audiences that as the family goes so does the fate of life on earth. His sermons were saturated with the importance of the family and the proper place each individual plays in the unit’s structure. For example, on August 29, 1976 Falwell delivered a sermon titled the “Characteristics of a Christian Home” and stated, “The most heavenly thing on earth

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<sup>76</sup> Pastor Jerry Falwell, When Will America Sit Down and Cry?” Record Group 3: Old-Time Gospel Hour, Series 6: OTGH Transcripts 500’s, Unit 16. OTGH # 591, Series 5. LUA.



is the Christian home.”<sup>77</sup> It is a place he said, where the members respect each other and follow Gods rules. The bad news that people heard regarding the public school drug and crime problems, he concluded, were consequences from the lack of strong family homes in those afflicted communities.<sup>78</sup>

Falwell did not value the family just because it was a law set up by God, but argued its extreme importance because he believed it was the integral element for all of life, put into existence through the essential creation story in Genesis. “To even stop to define the family,” Falwell reasoned at a seminar in 1982, “indicates that we’ve forgotten what the family is. We’ve forgotten basic, conceptual principles. That family in the Garden of Eden became a reality when God brought together a man and a woman—one man for one woman for one lifetime.”<sup>79</sup> National disasters and problems, he said, are the repercussions and side effects of the broken family structure.

Moreover, the family, Falwell explained, had to follow a precise, correct and God-ordained structure, where the man is the leader, the wife the follower, and the children respect their parents. In another sermon delivered in 1977, Falwell continued describing what the family is and is not by underscoring the natural and unnatural in God’s design supported by his interpretation of Second Timothy 3:3. An upset Falwell complained about homosexuality: “Without natural affection, verse 3, and of course this

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<sup>77</sup> Pastor Jerry Falwell, “Characteristics of a Christian Home,” August 29, 1976. Record Group 3: Old-Time Gospel Hour, Series 3: OTGH Transcripts 200’s, Unit 1: OTGH #204: 2. LUA.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>79</sup> Jerry Falwell, “Strengthening Families in the Nation.” Speech delivered at the Christian Life Commission in Atlanta 1982. Falwell Family Papers, Record Group 4, Speeches and Sermons. LUA.

is very obvious. This means men not interested in women, women not interested in men, but men with men (Romans 1) working that which is unseemly, women with women, lesbians, homosexuals, without natural affection. Now if God says something is unnatural and in Romans 1 calls it reprobate and perverted then we needn't call it anything else.” He expanded these conclusions by accusing secular America of breaking God-created separate gender spheres through contemporary fashion and the women's liberation movement. “And yet, today, there's a real effort to create a unisexual society, where the men all look like women and the women all look like men and you can't really tell them apart. And where, very often the women work and the men keep the children.” By the end of the statement, he was furious with those who were turning God's creation upside down. “[Homosexuality and inseparable gender distinctions is] just a total reversal in every strata of life, a disintegration of the home, without natural affection.”<sup>80</sup>

In many other sermons Falwell discussed gender roles and pointed out the groups who were attacking the sanctity of the home. Usually it was the homosexual community and women's liberation that drew his ire. In one example, during a sermon on June 20, 1976 Falwell accused the women's liberation movement and lesbians for working to destroy God's plan for the family. He went so far as to say they were doing it out of spite because they were “spinsters” and “failures in life.”<sup>81</sup> Women, he later repeated, should be in the home loving their husbands and attending to their children. However,

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<sup>80</sup> Jerry Falwell, Untitled Sermon, June 1, 1977, Record Group 3: Old-Time Gospel Hour, Series 10: Mid-Week (MW) Transcripts, Unit 1, 102: 15. LUA.

<sup>81</sup> Jerry Falwell, “Learning To Do The Right Things,” Aug 15, 1976, Record Group 3: Old-Time Gospel Hour, Sub-Group 4, Series 3, Unit 1: OTGH #202: 9 and 10. LUA.

he understood family financial problems and knew not all could meet the ideal. "I'm not against women working, but I think that the family is the first priority."<sup>82</sup> In short, he believed that men working while women stayed in the home gave the best chance for a healthy and well balanced family, which created a healthy community, nation, and world. It was the way things were "meant" to be. It was natural.

The conservative Protestant community believed their interpretation of the family was not only inflexible, but that no one could opt out and lead a fulfilling life, all because it was in human nature to fit into specific gender norms within a God-ordained family structure. The newspaper *The Christian Activist*, produced by Francis A. Schaeffer's son Frankie, highlighted the innate proper gender roles in their summer 1984 edition by targeting the "shortcomings" of the women's liberation movement. In the article "The Feminist Mistake," the author Mona Charen felt the feminist movement had left young women unhappy. To support her case, she summarized the lonely lives of three of her smart, well educated, single, but unsatisfied friends. She concluded, "In return, it [women's lib] has effectively robbed us of one thing upon which the happiness of most women rests - men."<sup>83</sup> A later article in the same newspaper reprised this message when Mary Pride, a former electrical engineer and women's liberation advocate, chose to switch lifestyles to become a homemaker and a Christian. After

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<sup>82</sup> Jerry Falwell, "Battle Hymn of the Republic," September 21, 1980, Record Group 3: Old-Time Gospel Hour, Sub-Group 4, Series 5: OTGH Transcripts 400s, OTGH #418: 17. LUA.

<sup>83</sup> Mona Charen, "The Feminist Mistake," *The Christian Activist*, Summer 1984. Francis and Edith Schaeffer Papers, 1968-1999, Series 3: Frankie Schaeffer, Sub-Series 5: Secondary, Box 5, Folder 3: The Christian Activist. WCA.

settling into her new lifestyle, she wrote a book titled *The Way Home, (Beyond Feminism-Back to Sanity)*. In this book she argued that the modern woman is at odds with biblical inerrancy and linked the women's liberation movement to idolatry and communism.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore like Falwell, she used Genesis chapter one repeatedly to argue that marriage is God's design for humanity to procreate through a man and woman becoming husband and wife under the holy bond of matrimony. She felt marriage completed and fulfilled people because of how humans were designed. She wrote in a subsection titled "Back to the Garden," "Adam was alone, incomplete, [but] not lonely. He needed a helper. He needed a woman."<sup>85</sup>

Many conservative Protestant churches and colleges strongly encouraged the proliferation of a fulfilling life, which was met, in addition to theological knowledge or a job, through marriage. Falwell for example, was certainly vocal about supporting the opportunity for new Christian couples to meet and have a successful marriage – but it must, he warned, function in a particular order. On Easter Sunday, March 23, 1977 Falwell complained, "Do you know what the problem in America today is? We are totally neglecting the home." He then told listeners of his ministry's efforts to confront this shortcoming. "We are trying to raise up a generation of young people who know what a Christian home is about." He then defined proper gender roles. "Young men

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Mary Pride, "The Way Home Part 2: Beyond Feminism, Divorce, and Selfishness: Back to Marriage." *The Christian Activist*, 1985. Francis and Edith Schaeffer Papers, 1968-1999, Series 3: Frankie Schaeffer, Sub-Series 5: Secondary, Box 5, Folder 3: The Christian Activist. WCA.

who know what it means to be the head of the home; to be under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and how to be the spiritual leader.” Next he explained the correct role of women: “We’re trying to raise up young ladies here who know what it means to be in the subjection to Jesus and in subjection of her husband.” This formula is what a strong marriage consisted of in Falwell’s eyes and he believed young Christians expected an opportunity to build such relationships through his church and Christian college. “And these young people come here admittedly looking for a Christian husband, a Christian wife.” In closing he again reiterated what gave his view credibility: “We believe the Christian home is the basic unit of society.”<sup>86</sup>

Examples tying God to the creation of the family home and gender roles could also be witnessed within quasi-religious/political special purpose organizations like Eagle Forum founded by Phyllis Schlafly. In 1980 Schlafly spoke at Thomas Road Baptist Church. After warning that the women’s liberation movement wanted the government to pay for daycare and abortion on demand, she used God’s role as creator to attack gender equality. “One of their [women’s lib] dogmas basically is that God goofed in making two different kinds of people and that we should use the Constitution and legislation to ignore the eternal differences in the roles that God has ordained between men and women.”<sup>87</sup> Schlafly’s central argument throughout the entirety of her speech, also reflected in the quotation above, was that humanity was removing God’s

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<sup>86</sup> Jerry Falwell, “Let’s Rise up and Build (Easter Sunrise Service on the Mountain),” March 23, 1977, Record Group 3: Old-Time Gospel Hour, Sub-Group 4, series 3: OTGH Transcripts 200, Unit 1: OTGH #234. LUA.

<sup>87</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, untitled, 1980, Record Group 3: Old-Time Gospel Hour, Sub-Group 4, series 4: OTGH Transcripts 300, Unit 6: OTGH #377: 12. LUA.

original and natural design and replacing it with artificial standards of normality. This line of thought was further supported in another Falwell sermon titled “Holy War.” Here he pointed to the importance of the family as one of the first things God created as seen in the Genesis story of Adam and Eve, and denounced any other definition. “God started the family before the Church, before the state, before any other institution God Almighty established the home, the family, the monogamous home - one man for one woman for one lifetime and you can not improve on God’s program in anything.”<sup>88</sup> Falwell believed the proper family balanced nature and the result was harmony in other sectors of life. “The strength and stability of families determine the validity and moral life of society... The family is the best and most efficient department of health, education and welfare.”<sup>89</sup>

The dangers of premarital sex or alternative lifestyles such as homosexuality were consistently interwoven into sermons as exemplified above, and conservative Protestants regarded them as something unnatural and reproachable by God’s laws. The references were pervasive throughout this religious group’s rhetoric and Falwell used it frequently to describe, just as Pat Robertson did, the opponents of the right way of living. For example, in 1979 when President Jimmy Carter hosted a White House Conference on Families and included homosexual individuals, Falwell argued that anything other than the proper legal union of heterosexuals had no place in society, especially in America.

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<sup>88</sup> Jerry Falwell, “Holy War,” 1980. Record Group 3: Old-Time Gospel Hour, Sub-Group 4, series 4: OTGH Transcripts 300, Unit 6: OTGH #377: 12, 14. LUA.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 19.

“The White House Conference on families believe that there are different versions and forms of the family. They believe that two homosexuals living together – a man with a man or a woman with a woman constitute a family. As a matter of fact they believe that any two persons living together constitute a family and you can just let your imagination run wild with that family. That’s horrendous, it’s immoral, it’s anti scriptural and I say it’s anti American...I say that it’s putting life below the level that God puts it.”<sup>90</sup>

All of these examples reflect the conservative Protestant understanding that heterosexual marriage and separate gender roles are hardwired by God into all people. Any other lifestyle such as women in the workplace, homosexual relationships, or even bachelordom went against human nature and could only lead to unsatisfied, ruined communities, national problems, and environmental disasters, all bringing society to the eve of destruction.

### Schaeffer’s Magnum Opus

Francis Schaeffer finally perfected his articulation of humanity’s proper place by writing one of his most popular books (1976) which was later turned into a film documentary (1977) titled *How Should We Then Live?* The conservative Protestant community considered the book and film astoundingly insightful and enlightening. It made sense of the world of the 1970s by validating the Christian’s faith and cultural

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<sup>90</sup> Jerry Falwell, Untitled Sermon, Record Group 3: Old-Time Gospel Hour, Sub-Group 4, series 4: OTGH Transcripts 300, Unit 8, OTGH # 390: 12, 13. LUA.

understanding of where humanity, God, and the earth fit within their long-held beliefs in the Judeo-Christian hierarchy and it showed the results of the imbalance that occurs if humanity strays from its proper place in God's hierarchical creation. Schaeffer presented the documentary version of *How Should We Then Live* in a ten part series. Each episode chronologically analyzed important periods in Western Civilization from Rome to the present.

*How Then Should We Live* explained the present by examining history through the lens of humanity's proper relationship with God. Schaeffer began by comparing the United States to the Roman Empire as Lindsell had done in his 1970 article, "Suicide Ahead?" Rome was not based on absolute truths as handed down by God and thus people functioned on self-interest instead of acting on what was best for society. In consequence, their empire crumbled. Deities, he argued, had to be infinite and offer absolute truths. The Roman gods were created by men and thus were finite and too weak for a society to function on. Christianity, however, had an infinite God that always was and always will be. Morality and rules descended from God to humans and were a product of God's creation.

Any period in history that went "well," Schaeffer often concluded, was a consequence of humanity living in accordance with the intended God/human/natural world relationship. He determined the era of the early Church was pure. People lived modestly, he said, and gave frequently to the church, which led them to set up charitable institutions, support the elderly and create hospitals. However, as time went by, early Christians moved away from the design to divide the church and the Bible as seen with



Thomas Aquinas, who mixed philosophy with scripture, resulting in replacing God with mankind. This human-centered philosophy remained predominant and, according to Schaeffer, is reflected in Renaissance art such as Michelangelo's David, a humanist portrayal of the power of man. Similarly, Leonardo da Vinci understood humanity merely as a machine. This worldview changed again during the Protestant Reformation, when people moved away from society's humanistic elements to embrace the absolute truth of the Bible and restore God's place over humanity. It was during the Reformation that Schaeffer felt humans acknowledged God's humanity and nature's proper place. Schaeffer spoke about Dutch Reformation art as an example where the natural world was beautifully depicted because it was created by God, the absolute ruler. The natural world was second in importance only to God's most unique and special creation, mankind.

Moving from the Reformation to the Revolutionary Age, Schaeffer explained that new philosophies from the likes of Thomas Jefferson were the product of a circle of Christian consensus.<sup>91</sup> What the founding fathers of the United States built was a direct result of the Protestant Reformation, a time when people understood humanity's proper place in creation. Thus the United States was successful because it was produced from a "balanced" and correct idealism. Schaeffer found the French Revolution was not based on biblical principles and its Rights of Man, for example, lacked any acknowledgement of God. Furthermore he stated that because the French Revolution alienated religion, the

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<sup>91</sup> Schaeffer was aware that Jefferson was not a traditional Christian. However, Schaeffer still felt Jefferson's ideas were molded by Christian culture that surrounded him.

consequence was sad events such as the taking of thousands of lives during the Reign of Terror. Schaeffer connected the French Revolution with the Red October 1917 revolution in Russia and remarked that communism was based on the same humanistic principles of ignoring God.

Schaeffer then spoke about the problems that the Scientific Age brought mankind, including Darwin's theory of evolution. He argued that evolution takes God out of His place as creator and puts humanity on the same level as animals. The idea of survival of the fittest allowed people to lose the belief that man is totally unique and a creation of God. With this new philosophy nothing is sacred; it led to eugenics, allowing for the Holocaust in World War II, and it could also lead to harvesting organs from humans in the future.

During the rest of *How Should We Then Live?* Schaeffer explained how modern society has increasingly accepted humanism and evolution by replacing God with man-centered philosophies. As a result society will break down and the government will grow in an attempt to control people. However, chaos will be the only result. Schaeffer's documentary used dramatizations depicting the consequences of a society bereft of a relationship with God, whose only option is to turn to an all-powerful government. To keep the people under control, Schaeffer speculated, government agents would one day put LSD in the water supply and select who should reproduce with genetic engineering. In conclusion, Schaeffer warned that humanity was at a crossroads where society could either turn back to restore everything to its proper relationship with God, or people could

incessantly try to maintain a society which had no bearings or absolutes, where only chaos and perversion reigned.

Within the first five months of publication, the book sold 114,000 copies.<sup>92</sup> To this day Francis Schaeffer's son Frankie receives royalty checks for producing and directing the film amounting to several thousand dollars a year.<sup>93</sup> The reason for such a response from the conservative Protestant community was that *How Should We Then Live* concisely explained the problems by using the Christian faith. Additionally, it offered a prediction of what the future would look like if secular society continued in its present course of ignoring God and embracing a society directed by manmade constructions. All of these themes were being worked out in conservative Protestant churches in the 1970s and Schaeffer accurately articulated them in his book and documentary, which were sold throughout the world.<sup>94</sup>

In 1981 Schaeffer once again reiterated his concept of humanity's proper place by centering on the "unnatural" practice of abortion in his book and film documentary, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, which he co-wrote with President Ronald Reagan's Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop. In one scene in the first episode, Koop stood next to a salt lake surrounded by plastic baby dolls. Koop explained that he was in the Middle East, standing on the same ground where Sodom and Gomorrah once existed.

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<sup>92</sup> Francis Schaeffer to James Sires, August 22, 1977. Francis and Edith Schaeffer Papers, 1968-1999. Sub-Series 5: Secondary, Box 3, Folder 11. WCA.

<sup>93</sup> Franky Schaeffer, *Crazy for God*, (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2007).

<sup>94</sup> Franky Schaeffer writes in his biography *Crazy For God* that after the publication of *How Should We Then Live*, he and his father traveled a lecture circuit speaking to conservative Protestant audiences and showing the film. Overall Franky speculates they spoke to forty thousand people and made two million dollars from sales.

The symbolism is clear. Abortion is a corruption and perversion of modern man, not unlike the social norms set by people in the biblical depiction of Sodom and Gomorrah thousands of years ago, which God found reprehensible and destroyed with fire. While at the ancient site, Koop commented on the upset creation hierarchy by reporting that a million abortions are performed each year while advocate groups fight to protect baby harbor seals from being slaughtered. Furthermore, he noted that other species of animals are protected by the endangered species list and quotas are followed for whale hunting. This argument Koop proposed underscored the hypocrisy of modern society's acceptance of abortion while protecting animals, which made sense within the conservative Protestant community. Other scenes conveyed the message that abortion destroys the sanctity of human life by showing animals and infants adjacent to each other in laboratory testing cages.

It is evident that Jerry Falwell had seen *Whatever Happened to the Human Race*. In 1982 he gave a sermon centering on abortion and repeated the ironic comparison between unborn babies and animals that Koop had made. However, before making his point, Falwell made sure his congregation knew he was an "animal lover" and believed in "animal rights." He said that he once had seventeen dogs until his neighbors complained, but he still continued to have them in and out of the house. Falwell then cited an ad he saw in *US Magazine*. "I love animals," Falwell began, "But let me read this to you in a nation that's aborting, murdering by suction, by saline solution, and by any other means beating and destroying little babies to death at the rate of one and half million a year. Here's what the ad says. Each year some one hundred and eighty

thousand baby harp seals are clubbed to death by Canadian and Norwegian seal hunters. Using our tax dollars—um, sounds like Planned Parenthood...” He then backtracked, validating animal rights but not if they upset the hierarchy. “Now I want to say that I respect what they’re doing, but isn’t it a tragedy... [that our nation is killing the unborn in the millions while saving seals]. I believe the baby harp seals ought to be saved. I believe the baby children ought to be saved too.”<sup>95</sup> Here, Falwell was not dismissing the value of animal life by minimizing the problem. Instead he was reassessing the situation by factoring the value of humans into the creation hierarchy. This approach to nature Falwell abandoned roughly ten years later in the 1990s. But at this time, he proved in tune with the eco-friendly approach of Lindsell, Schaeffer and other conservative Protestants who valued nature as a creation of God.<sup>96</sup>

It may not be difficult to understand why conservative Protestants understand abortion as a horrible sin. They believe it is the destruction of a viable human life, but beneath that logic, it is an example of science taking the place of God in the creation of human life. This latter statement is supported by the fact that conservative Protestants not only opposed abortion but also the creation of life in the laboratory. In Falwell’s sermon “The Law of Sowing and Reaping,” he spoke about the problem of divorce and warned that it was a reason for social problems. Next he stated “Down here in Norfolk

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<sup>95</sup> Jerry Falwell, Untitled Sermon, Falwell Ministries, Record Group 3: Old-Time Gospel Hour. FM 3:4 Box 5: OTGH Transcripts #491. LUA.

<sup>96</sup> He also believed that parents should allow their children to have pets and denounced those who refused requests to have them. Although much of Falwell’s rhetoric on Sundays was militant he wanted others to know he was a loving person and on one occasion published a picture of himself and his wife bottle-feeding bunnies. The pictures were reproduced in a later biography written by his wife.

and other places where we have genetic engineering going on, in vitro fertilization and so on, scientists are playing God. That is no less a criminal activity than ministers who play God like Jim Jones...Better leave that to God Almighty.”<sup>97</sup> He then went on to speak out against homosexuality in the same breath.

In 1980 Bellevue Baptist Church pastor Adrian Rogers spoke against science creating life in his sermon “The God of Creation.” “I read in the newspapers a while back where the newspaper said, ‘Scientists Create Life in Laboratory.’ Whoopee do... No scientist ever created anything.” Rogers warned that mankind was playing in the realm where only God should tread, “And I’m fearfully afraid in, in ah, of what mankind is able to do and what mankind will do with his so-called vaunted knowledge and wisdom. But only God has the power to create.”<sup>98</sup> Schaeffer had also warned against creating life in the laboratory as well as abortion in episode ten of *How Should We Then Live*. He argued that since humanity had removed the laws of God from society, the authoritarian elite would use science to replace God. Schaeffer expected genetic engineering to be very popular in the future and thought that the elite would decide reproduction rates.<sup>99</sup> Falwell thought that science’s role in procreation was so important that he brought it to Ronald Reagan’s attention in a meeting soon after the election of

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<sup>97</sup> Jerry Falwell, “The Law of Sowing and Reaping,” Falwell Ministries, Record Group 3: Old-Time Gospel Hour. FM 3:4 Box: 6 OTGH Transcripts 561: 28. LUA.

<sup>98</sup> Adrian Rogers, “The God of Creation,” 1980, The Adrian Rogers Sermon Archive.

<sup>99</sup> Francis Schaeffer, *How Then Should We Live*, Episode X, (Muskegon, Michigan: Video Gospel Films, 1980).

1980. Among the “ethical issues” discussed with Reagan on December 29 were “Artificial Insemination, selective breeding, genetic engineering and euthanasia.”<sup>100</sup>

### The Ecological Crisis and Humanity

During the 1970s and 1980s Falwell and others such as Pat Robertson never made the natural world something that should be disregarded. Nevertheless, it was secondary to the need to preserve humanity’s proper place in God’s hierarchical creation. Furthermore, by humanity living as God intended, it was believed nature would be healed by God. Like Lindsell who argued for the real cause of the ecological crisis in his article “Suicide Ahead,” Falwell concluded the ecological and energy crises were a byproduct of Christians not actively fulfilling their role and status on earth. In his 1976 sermon “America Back to God” he reflected on these issues: “What about the energy crisis? Three years ago, from out of the blue we’re out of oil. Strange, all of our lives we’ve never heard of such a thing. Now we’re hearing about food shortages in the future. Our air and water are polluted. This is all, I believe, the wrath of God upon a nation who has inside her borders a sleeping church.”<sup>101</sup> By 1979 however, he started thinking the energy crisis was a fabrication but still thought the situation needed to be

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<sup>100</sup> Jerry Falwell, “An Agenda for the ‘80’s.” December 29, 1980. Fal 4-3, Series 1, Folder 1, Dr. Falwell’s Notes for Speaking with Ronald Reagan, 1980. LUA.

<sup>101</sup> Jerry Falwell, “America Back to God,” FM 3-4 Box 2, Unit 7: OTGH # 386: 10. LUA.

improved.<sup>102</sup> What was more important to Falwell was getting the United States as a society back to Bible-believing Christians. When that first crucial step was accomplished all other things would fall into line.

Others such as Pat Robertson believed with Falwell that human repentance could solve national problems. Although Robertson believed hardships and natural disasters were signs that the end times were coming, he also held out hope that by repentance and praying to God, humanity could change God's judgment and the Second Coming of Christ. In May 1981 Robertson wrote, most likely referring to Reagan's election, that the events of that year prove that repentance can save nations. However, he felt the majority of Americans were not living in accordance with God's laws but accepted abortion and pornography. Robertson warned that God's retribution would be visited upon society in the form of poor weather, poor crops and drought.<sup>103</sup> This example once again shows the conservative Protestant view that human beliefs and lifestyles play a role in the natural world and that humanity, as the pinnacle of God's creation, is connected with the Creator and all of nature.

Like Falwell, Robertson also had a soft spot in his heart for nature but spoke about the ecological crisis more often than Falwell. Robertson's father Absalom Willis Robertson was a U.S. Representative and Senator from the state of Virginia. One of his pet issues was environmental protection and it seems to have rubbed off on his son.

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<sup>102</sup> Jerry Falwell, "I am Not Ashamed of the Gospel of Christ – Romans 1," Asset ID: 254560, Tape No: FB-POT-0362.mov, Rec Date: 08-19-1979, Tape Series: Old Time Gospel Hour, 11:30:26:21. Communications Department, Liberty University.

<sup>103</sup> Pat Robertson, *Pat Robertson's Perspectives* (Christian Broadcasting Network, Jan-May 1981): 7. RUA.



Although Robertson felt the key for blessings in the natural world would come from humanity returning to God and living properly, he spoke directly about the ecological crisis. Robertson believed that the earth had finite resources and that the growing population outpaced the amount of energy being used. If things did not change, Robertson warned in 1980, the following results would occur:

1) Those possessing dwindling supplies of nonrenewable energy sources will extract an ever-increasing price for energy. 2) The substitution of more hazardous energy sources for oil and gas will present us with unacceptable environmental problems – air pollution, acid rain, aesthetic degradation or radiation hazards – which could menace entire populations.<sup>104</sup>

In May of 1977 Robertson felt what was being done to save the environment was insufficient. Conservation, he said, only put off the inevitable crash.<sup>105</sup> However, after telling his readers about the world problems and suggesting earthly answers, like Falwell he believed that humans should get back to living Godly lifestyles and further suggested these world problems were indicators that the end of the world was imminent.

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<sup>104</sup> Pat Robertson, Pat Robertson's Perspectives (Christian Broadcasting Network, June-July 1980):1. RUA.

<sup>105</sup> Pat Robertson, Pat Robertson's Perspectives (Christian Broadcasting Network, INC. May 1977). RUA.

## Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution challenged the literal interpretation of the Genesis creation story. The situation seems simple enough: because evolution offered a different story depicting how humanity and life in general came to be, Bible literalists reacted in disdain. However, the challenge of evolution should be understood as something deeper than science offering an alternative view of creation. To conservative Protestants, science was taking God out of the Christian hierarchy as the Creator and lowering humanity to the same level as the animal world. Thus, evolution destroyed the conservative Protestant worldview and to this religious group, if humanity was no longer a unique creation by God then the "proper" way of living could be transformed by the whims of humanity.

Bible literalists fought publically against the theory of evolution in the famous Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925. Although the fundamentalists won the case, the group was visibly humiliated and did not make waves on the same national level until the emergence of the religious right in the late 1970s. The origin story of the religious right is found in the later 1960s, when a series of social movements further challenged the conservative Protestant worldview of humanity's proper place within creation. This came in the particular form of women's liberation and gay rights. Additionally, the tumultuous period of the later 1960s, which included Vietnam War protests, race riots, the impending ecological crisis and the threat of a nuclear attack by the Soviet Union, was very unsettling to all Americans including conservative Protestants. In response,

throughout the 1970s conservative Protestants repeatedly told themselves that the end of world was coming, inspired in part by Hal Lindsay's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Evangelicals and fundamentalists could agree that doomsday was indeed coming but Falwell, Robertson and others offered an alternative answer in starting a movement that returned humanity to its divine place in the universe as part of the supernatural world while also being part of the natural. Their plan was structured as something very close to what might be called a Christian, "back-to-nature movement."<sup>106</sup>

In the secular world, the basic premise of a back-to-nature movement is one in which humans attempt to cut out the artificial or adopted human-made norms and replace them with the "natural." Processed foods are replaced with organic; people move to the country where they grow organic vegetables and compost their waste; garments may be handmade from local fabrics; and natural environments are preserved from development. The expected results from a secular back to nature movement is improved individual health for human participants and better overall health for the earth. In other words, a secular back to nature movement is one in which the participants purify their bodies through lifestyle changes in order to live as intended by nature, and in return their bodies reap the rewards of health, not to mention a reversal of the dire apocalyptic-

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<sup>106</sup> What Falwell and others were trying to do was create a massive nationwide revival or a Third Great Awakening. A revival indeed brings many more believers into the fold and is supposed to purify those participating in renewing their dedication to God. However, what Falwell was trying to do goes beyond the terms of a revival. He wanted to fix earthly problems by getting as close as possible to how God wanted humanity to live, which was as close to the Garden of Eden as people could get.

like predictions that the earth is dying as a consequence of environmental abuse perpetrated by humans.

What Falwell and others offered conservative Protestants in the 1970s was similar to results that might be expected from a secular back-to-nature movement. Falwell, Robertson and others explained the social problems of the twentieth century by stating that humanity was no longer living as God intended. Instead, they contended, the secular world brought into their lives artificial or human-made norms that conflicted with what God the creator intended, as understood in the creation story of Genesis. The consistently repeated solution by the conservative Protestant elite was to get back as close as possible to the Garden of Eden: live as Adam and Eve did in the garden, one man for one woman bonded in marriage; understand that the family is the unchangeable basic unit of society; acknowledge that humans are of God's creation and science cannot take the place of God as creator; and realize that when humans deviate from the garden only disaster awaits in the form of problems and pestilence. For conservative Protestants to resolve problems such as the ecological crisis and save the U.S. from nuclear holocaust with the Soviet Union, people must return to God's laws and cease their human-created or artificial norms of living. As in the biblical chapter of Isaiah, the only way to save the crumbling nation was not to be found in beneficial decisions in the areas of economics, science or technology but only through worshiping God and living correctly.

Bible messages similar to Isaiah, such as Noah and the flood in the book of Genesis, helped provide the foundations for the conservative Protestant belief that God,

humanity and nature are interconnected. According to the Bible, with the exception of Noah and his family, mankind had forgotten God and His commandments. As a consequence God decided to start the world anew by sending a natural disaster via a worldwide flood. This account is very similar to the other Genesis story about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The fate of these two cities remained regularly cited in conservative Protestant culture to show what happens when humanity misbehaves. The key importance to the idea of “misbehaving” is that it signifies a perversion or a departure from mankind’s proper place in creation and therefore merits retribution from God. Conversely, if humanity respects and worships God and biblical laws, then the nation as a whole will function in harmony and people will reap blessings from their creator.

Interesting to note and somewhat obvious regarding the above understanding is that conservative Protestants see the world and themselves as conduits for conversing with God through a supernatural conversation based on biblical rules, behavior, blessings and punishments. The latter two are given out by God to humans through the physical realm. Social problems including crime and a poor economy along with biological pestilence such as disease, crop failures, and pollution are all signs from God that people have deviated from their proper place in His creation.

Indeed, conservative Protestants observed a holistic view of creation and its health, including family, community, nation and the environment, all dependent on maintaining mankind’s proper place in God’s hierarchical creation. The formula for a better earthly existence was quite plain to Schaeffer, Falwell and Robertson throughout

the 1970s. All they needed was organization and support to effectively turn it into a movement. During this process, their relationship to the natural world continued to evolve.

## CHAPTER V

### THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT THROUGH THE LENS OF NATURE

As editorials devoted to ecology virtually disappeared from the pages of the religious community's most popular magazines, commentaries on homosexuality and abortion filled the void. Between Oct 10, 1969 and September 25, 1970, *Christianity Today* published three articles on homosexuality and eleven on abortion. These numbers steadily rose over the years. As shown in TABLE 2, between Oct 8, 1976 and September 23, 1977, homosexuality garnered fifteen articles and abortion rose to sixteen.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, conservative Protestants were greatly concerned over these modern social movements that fundamentalist leaders including Falwell and Robertson blamed for the world's problems, arguing that humanity needed to return to its natural and proper relationship with God. The formula for "normalcy" however, needed a vehicle for implementation. Conservative Protestants required a movement of their own. Falwell took the initiative by trying out various approaches on his congregation, the attached K-12 Christian school, the college, and his television broadcast, *The Old Time Gospel Hour*. While the philosophy of humanity's proper place in relationship with God remained a foundational argument on which the movement gained traction, new layers of ideas regarding what was "natural" and the natural world were created and incorporated into what became the religious right movement. These new layers featured

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a rejection of wealth and materialism, a viewpoint that gained credibility from a Christian interpretation of American history and nationalism. This perspective connected the community to a time when a struggle with wilderness and pastoral living forged the “right kind” of citizens. Within the process of creating the religious right, all of God’s creation emerged to play a valuable role and in turn encouraged calls for environmental protection.

TABLE 2 Issues Throughout the 1970s

October 10, 1969 - Sept 25, 1970,	Sept 24, 1971	Oct 13, 1972 – Sept 28, 1973	Oct 12, 1973 – Sept 27, 1974	October 11, 1974-Sept 26, 1975	Oct 8, 1976 –Sept 23, 1977
Gay Rights: 3	Gay Rights: 5	Gay Rights: 5	Gay Rights: 8	Gay Rights: 6	Gay Rights: 15
Abortion: 11	Abortion: 13	Abortion: 17	Abortion: 10	Abortion: 14	Abortion: 16

This information was compiled from the number of articles under the index headings found in the bound annual periodical volumes of *Christianity Today*.

On Sunday, April 24, 1975 thousands of the faithful streamed into Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. In addition to a full sanctuary, two other church buildings were filled to maximum capacity, including the gymnasium. The youth program alone counted over 2,500 in attendance. It was “patriotic day” for Pastor Jerry Falwell’s 13,000 member church and the service was later televised in the United States



and Canada.<sup>108</sup> The chorale was decked out in red, white and blue, ready to perform a fifteen-minute program titled “I love America.” The service began with one of the singers, Doug Oldham, requesting donations to fund the church’s Christian school. While stirring piano music played, Oldham explained that he had recently received a letter from an elderly lady who was on a fixed income and donated only one dollar. The meager gift however, was worth far more, as it was found in her husband’s wallet the day he died. Oldham suggested that only the work of God is worth such gifts and then he sang an old time favorite, “It Will be Worth It All.” Falwell followed with a few lighthearted jokes about the piano player and promised that congregants could sit on the floor if the church ran out of chairs. He asked his audience and those at home to purchase Bibles. Part of the proceeds would also go into the Christian school.<sup>109</sup> His relaxed demeanor then turned more serious. Falwell directly contrasted his Christian schools with the late 1960s counterculture. “Lynchburg Baptist College and these other schools,” Falwell began, “are unique in that unlike most American colleges and universities today to our shame, there is patriotism on this campus.”<sup>110</sup> He continued in this vein of thought, “Our young people love America, it’s not just talk and music. It’s not just bicentennial celebration. Yes we’re praying for revival. These young people

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<sup>108</sup> Thomas Road Baptist Church services were recorded live and televised in the U.S. and Canada at a later date. The television program was call the Old Time Gospel Hour – a slight change from the older Charles Fuller show called The Old Time Revival Hour, a radio show that Falwell listened to as a child and helped lead him to become a pastor.

<sup>109</sup> Congregants and viewers could also purchase Bibles for people in South America. In return they would receive a thank you note from the recipients.

<sup>110</sup> Lynchburg Baptist College changed its name in 1976 to Liberty Baptist College. “These other schools” refers to the K-12 Christian schools that operated in association with Thomas Road Baptist Church.

love America.” Falwell promised his schools were pro-American. “We don’t have any draft card burners and American flag desecraters on this campus. It’s not allowed. Our young people love America. Thank God for the freedom here. With all our problems, where else in the world can you see and hear, what you’re about to see and hear right now. I love America.”<sup>111</sup>

Straightaway the orchestra played the introduction for the chorale, who joyously sang an upbeat, inspirational song about the love they held for the U.S.A. During a pause in the music, a young lady cited Alexis de Tocqueville, who concluded during his time in nineteenth-century America that the source of the new nation’s greatness was the Christian church. The speaker warned, however, “Today our nation has left her faith in God and the principles which laid the foundations of her greatness.” The only hope was spiritual revival. Her speech transitioned to a man speaking over the crescendo of the chorale repeating that people must not be dismayed because “The church is alive!”<sup>112</sup>

The introduction and “I Love America” program was not just a call for money and indeed, as Falwell pointed out, it was not only a bicentennial celebration. The entire introduction was expertly woven together into layered messages that advertised a specific brand. Besides selling the traditional fundamentalist spiritual message for the individual to form a personal connection with God (promising everlasting life), Falwell

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<sup>111</sup> It should be noted that Falwell was not a “Bible thumper” who typically shouted during sermons. While delivering this message, he was calm, collected and communicated with a comforting and friendly demeanor. At the same time however, it was clear he was speaking passionately about a serious issue.

<sup>112</sup> Jerry Falwell, “Patriotic Day at TRBC,” March 27, 1975, FM 3:4 Box 1, audio cassettes, LUA.

incorporated the idea that salt of the earth, godly Americans could save their country from certain destruction. This goal would not be accomplished by sending missionaries to far-away lands. Instead, donations were invested into the building of a Christian educational establishment that consisted of a K-12 school and a college, which he promised would produce patriotic Christians. The audience had the opportunity not only to contribute by giving their money and attending services, but could also actively participate by sending their children to his schools.

Falwell was promoting a unique national identity, termed here as “Christian American nationalism.” This ideology served as a vehicle for effectively organizing the conservative Protestant understanding of mankind’s proper place in God’s creation. Additionally, to help strengthen the nationalistic philosophy, conservative Protestants incorporated new perceptions of the natural world. These views championed a simpler time embodied in romantic notions of nineteenth-century agrarian America, when people worked closely with the land. Furthermore, they openly rejected ideas of wealth and materialism, two evils that were connected to industry and the city. Alternatively, they actively embraced a virtue of thrift and in some cases promoted Christian environmental stewardship. All of these ideas worked together into a formula that provided a possible solution to save the God-ordained institutions of family, church and nation. Falwell’s was not the only fundamentalist voice promoting these philosophies, but his was undeniably the most prominent. Although he was not the first to champion these causes, he was arguably the most successful of his generation, which he helped turn into the New Christian Right movement. In another time period, Falwell’s message might have

barely tugged a few heartstrings, but like Norman Rockwell's *The Four Freedoms*, painted during World War II, his ideas were designed to define America in stark contrast to the current reality.

### Christian American Nationalism

Christian American nationalism is a story, an imagined common national heritage that features conservative Protestants as remnants of a glorious past charged in the present with saving the future of America. Its leaders could not build a movement based on reactions that produced feelings of fear and hatred for 1960s counterculture. They had to create something they hoped America would embrace and ultimately become. Conservative Protestants had a basic idea of what they wanted and it was not just what was before the late 1960s. They recalled that early twentieth-century America had accepted evolution, which greatly embarrassed them at the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925. Additionally, the Supreme Court had prohibited school prayer in 1962. The key to building a Christian national identity was to go beyond living memory. They settled on pre-industrial America and the best place to build this ideology was in the already developing Christian school movement. The material taught in these schools had to make sense of the world from a Christian perspective. The authors did not have the luxury of pastors who could skip over or generalize issues as was possible in Sunday sermons. Textbooks required messages supported by “factual” detail and, furthermore, had to be parent approved.

The Christian school movement initially grew out of racial strife in the 1960s. Parents who refused participation in integration quickly made the choice to enroll their children in private schools. Integration took time to reach some places in the South and occurred throughout the 1970s, but it is a mistake to attribute the Christian and homeschool movement solely to racism. Virtually all of the rhetoric coming from the movement in the 1970s ignored race and instead promoted Christian American nationalism. The latter argument was an ennobling and guilt-free cause that had the capability to go well beyond the integration issue to confront all they found wrong with the America of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The Christian School movement started in 1960 with an average of two schools founded per-day and this number doubled from 1965 to 1975.<sup>113</sup> In 1988 Robert Smith, Executive Director of the Council for American Private Education (CAPE), estimated the Christian school enrollment to be about 700,000 students.<sup>114</sup> These schools functioned in isolation until the American Association of Christian Schools was founded in 1972. By 1982 it boasted 10,080 member schools with 175,000 students. Since 1965 Christian schools have experienced a 630 percent increase, while the number of public and Catholic schools has decreased.<sup>115</sup> This information should be tempered, however, with the fact that Christian schools only represent two to three percent of the entire K-12

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<sup>113</sup> Melinda Bollar Wagner. *God's Schools: Choice and Compromise in American Society*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 9.

<sup>114</sup> Susan D. Rose. *Keeping Them Out of the Hands of Satan*. (New York: Routledge, 1988), 35-36.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

educational system. Even so, Christian schools boast well over one million students today.

The two most popular Christian educational publishing companies were and remain today, Bob Jones University Press and A Beka Book Publishers. Both produce material by and for Christians who hold a fundamentalist point of view. The most prolific of the two in the 1970s was A Beka Books, which continues today in association with Pensacola Christian College.<sup>116</sup> The company was co-created in 1974 by Beka, the wife of Arlin Horton, the college's president. A Beka Books sold so well (and continue to do so) that students who attend the unaccredited college pay nominal tuition, an attractive proposition that brings many to its "safe" campus.

What is unique about the educational material is that it was not intended just to educate, but to present Christian, parent-approved messages to children in order to build barriers against the changes in American society that were witnessed during the late 1960s. As the introduction of a 1975 A Beka book states, "The purpose of the OF AMERICA Reading Series is to return to the nation's classrooms the great patriotic and character-building classics which have become a part of our national heritage, but which have been almost universally excluded in textbooks in the recent years... If our country is to remain a land of liberty, we must continue to teach each individual to think on his

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<sup>116</sup> Bob Jones University Press released some material in the 1970s similar to A Beka Books, such as reprints of older stories, e.g., a book on British literature, but their impact came in the 1980s with fresh material which will be discussed in Chapter four.

own.”<sup>117</sup> Although the introduction promoted independent thinking, the top priority was making sure the “right” messages reached the student. Thus, the ever-growing number of Christian schools in the 1970s opened a market that demanded new educational material.

As a historical source, the Christian school material should also be understood as a philosophical representative of the conservative Protestant soon-to-be religious right mainstream community. As previously mentioned, the material was tailored specifically for concerned evangelical and fundamentalist students, but it also had to be parent approved, a tall order to say the least. These parents had deemed public schools untrustworthy because of their “unruly classrooms” and “liberal ideologies” and in response wished to ensure their children received the right kind of education through their trusted church. However, even Christian schools found pleasing parents to be difficult. One fundamentalist Christian school for example, allowed students to use older secular history textbooks to take up the slack of the Christian publishers who had not yet produced material for all levels. One book used at the school titled *Under Freedom’s Banner* had been hand-censored probably in the 1970s or early 1980s.<sup>118</sup> In this instance, President Franklin Roosevelt’s biography section was covered with glue

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<sup>117</sup> Rhyllis Rand, Beverly Rainey, and Mike Davis, *Of America Vol. II*, (Pensacola, FL: A Beka Book Publications, 1975), Introduction.

<sup>118</sup> Much of the Christian educational material used in this chapter was found in a former Christian school by the author. The school was run by a fundamentalist church and operated between 1975 and 1987. Upon its closing, the classrooms were subsequently used for vacation Bible school and Sunday school classes. The bookshelves, however, remained untouched, making them virtual time capsules. The books were issued to the students in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

and black construction paper. In short, these parents were serious about the material their children read in school, making each message relayed from author to audience carefully calculated. Thus, this educational material should be understood as one of the best and most important sources reflecting the worldviews and ideologies of the common conservative Protestant who would later sympathize and participate in the religious right movement.

During its first years as a publishing company, A Beka Books scrambled to get “readers” out to elementary school audiences and soon realized they did not necessarily need new material. They were, after all, trying to recreate a past America and concluded it was suitable to handpick literature from the eighteenth and nineteenth century that promoted acceptable values. They quickly reprinted old standards such as *Pilgrims Progress* and especially the well-known McGuffey Readers of the nineteenth century. The latter was a series of primer booklets produced for grades one through six released in the 1830s by a Protestant backwoods-traveling preacher named William Holmes McGuffey. The stories all held religious-friendly morals and took place in rural areas or small towns. The venue for the stories is not surprising given that McGuffey intended his product for a predominately agrarian nineteenth-century audience. But what is odd is that later twentieth-century conservative Protestants fancied themselves of the same ilk.

Many people who were members in churches such as Falwell’s were the first and second generation who came into town from the farm. A great number of southerners had relocated to take industrial or service jobs made possible in part by the government during or just after World War II. Two-thirds of the South’s population, for example,



lived in rural areas during the 1940s, but by 1960 less than one-half remained.<sup>119</sup> In the 1970s these people romanticized the bucolic landscapes of the McGuffey stories. The family farm or small town of the nineteenth century was devoid of technology that made life easy and instead promoted hard work as well as long-held, respected morals. Besides teaching right from wrong, themes of nature appreciation and conservation sometimes played a direct role as a moral lesson. In the A Beka Book's *Widening Horizons: the Modern McGuffey Reader*, printed in 1981, one story titled "Land That I Love" featured a young John Muir. The author described how Muir stopped his father from clear-cutting all the trees on their land. Later on in his life, the story states, Muir helped preserve forests where "...millions of Americans...see the beauty God gave our country."<sup>120</sup> After the conclusion, two pages were dedicated to the necessity of conserving natural resources and offered three strategies people could do to wisely use what God created.<sup>121</sup>

Nature appreciation was also visible in the "Of America Series" book titled *Liberty Tree* (1974). One featured piece written by the nineteenth-century nature lover, John Burroughs, would please any contemporary environmentalist. The story titled "The

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<sup>119</sup> Nancy Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 54. "The years following World War II saw the kind of rapid industrialization and urbanization other regions had experienced earlier. In the 1940s, the South was nearly two-thirds rural, by 1960, the percentage had dropped to under fifty. In the 1940s, one third of the South's workers were in agricultural occupations; by 1960, only 10 percent worked on farms."

<sup>120</sup> Ullin Whitney Leavell, Mary Louise Friebele and Tracie Cushman, "Land That I Love," *Widening Horizons: The Modern McGuffey Readers*, (Pensacola, Florida: A Beka Book Publication, 1981), 273.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 274-275.

Bluebird” promoted the idea that nature was God’s creation and therefore beautiful. Most notably, the terms “she” and “nature” were used interchangeably when referring to the “creator” or in other words “God.” “When Nature made the bluebird, she wished to make the sky and earth friends. So she gave him the color of one on his back, and the hue of the other on his breast.... He [the blue bird] is the peace bringer.”<sup>122</sup> The inclusion of Burroughs is a striking example of a nature-friendly story picked out by fundamentalists for the wider religious community’s Christian schools in the 1970s. Unlike the censored copy of *Under Freedom’s Banner*, the *Liberty Tree*, which was found in the same bookshelves, lacked glue and black construction paper.<sup>123</sup> Burrough’s story would, however, not be seen again in later editions, as will be explained in Chapter four.

In addition to the revised McGuffey Readers, A Beka Books published fresh material in which they made a conscious effort to explain how people became Americans. They concluded it was the wilderness that molded individuals into fulfilling their proper roles within God’s creation and led them to ultimately become “real Americans.”<sup>124</sup> The story “Pioneers” in the 1974 book *Flags Unfurled* concisely conveyed this message. “Some of our poets and thinkers have tried to tell us what it means to be a real American. They have set us thinking about what it was that changed

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<sup>122</sup> Laura Hicks and Mike Davis. *Liberty Tree: of America Reading Series* (Pensacola Florida: A Beka Books, 1974), 51. Note the capitalized “Nature” which was written not to recognize nature as something unto itself but instead to specifically denote God.

<sup>123</sup> There were many other copies of the 1974 *Liberty Tree* that were also not censored.

<sup>124</sup> This idea directly reflects conclusions from Frederick Jackson Turner’s Frontier Thesis and Walter Prescott Webb’s *The Great Plains*.

the men of the Old World into the pioneers of a new land. No doubt the work of making a living in the depths of the vast American forest developed strength of body and mind in the pioneers.”<sup>125</sup> In this story, nature functioned as a necessary but character building obstacle that forced Americans to live simply, give up Old World luxuries, and learn from ‘back to the earth’ Indian ways. The author romanticized frontier life by praising log cabins and bearskin rugs, and stating that settlers wore shirts made of deerskin and homespun fabric “much like those of the Indians.” Additionally, the struggle with nature idealistically supported the nurturing elements of hard work, a subsistence lifestyle, strength, ingenuity, and the proper family structure including clearly defined gender roles. The accompanying illustration depicted a man at work chopping wood while his son gathered sticks. The wife and daughters stood in the background near the log cabin. Thus, in the process of subduing nature, settlers not only molded it into a farm, but nature shaped settlers into God-fearing, strong and, in short, near-perfect Americans. Hence, the optimal relationship between nature and conservative Protestants, at least in the 1970s, was one that was reciprocal and refining, not a disregard for the natural world in the quest for profit.

The story “Pioneers” was not unique. In addition to the rural landscapes used in the McGuffey Readers, the Pilgrims specifically were celebrated as “great Americans” and referred to repeatedly as proof that America was founded on Christianity.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Laurel Hicks and Mike Davis, *Flags Unfurled*, (Pensacola, Florida: A Beka Books, 1974), 58.

<sup>126</sup> Judy Hull Moore, Laurel Hicks and Stan Shimmin, *My America, Book One* (Pensacola, Florida: A Beka Books, 1977). The Pilgrims were included in this book’s

Pictures adorned pages of A Beka publications depicting Pilgrims, who braved New England winter snows and dark forests to get to church. The frontier called for men to fulfill their natural role as the gun-toting masculine protectors of women who followed clutching their Bibles.<sup>127</sup> Similar Christian nationalistic messages existed in other places in the religious community such as the sermons of Billy Graham, who in 1976 paired Christianity with American history. When referring to the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Graham said that each signer bowed his head “with a firm reliance upon the protection of Divine Providence.”<sup>128</sup> He also touched on the themes of Christian education and nationalism tied into the virtues of frontier life. “The Puritans and the Pilgrims came to the New World determined to provide education for their young. In the lands they’d left, education was the privilege of the few. Therefore, those early Americans flung up their rude schoolhouses all along the advancing frontier. Their first textbook was the Bible, their first task to teach children to read.”<sup>129</sup>

In addition to what made “real Americans” was the understanding of what sustained them in their ideal state. This message was communicated through almost all the stories where morals, if not learned in the backwoods, were taught on the farm or in some sort of pastoral setting. These stories are numerous and include such titles as, “The

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section on “Great People of America.” This view of the Pilgrims remains constant to the present day.

<sup>127</sup> Rhyllis Rand, Beverly Rainey, and Mike Davis, *Of America Vol. II*, (Pensacola, FL: A Beka Book Publications, 1975), 63.

<sup>128</sup> Billy Graham, New Years Eve Sermon, *Hour of Decision*, 1976. WCA.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

Proud Oak Tree,” “The Fly and the Moth,” “The Flax,” or “Catching the Colt.”<sup>130</sup> Paired well with the tales were quotations that promoted building strength through hardship, including “Do not pray for easy lives. Pray for stronger men!”<sup>131</sup> Other citations promoted nature appreciation in reflections by the likes of Abraham Lincoln: “...I cannot conceive how he [an atheist] could look up into the heavens and say there is no God.”<sup>132</sup>

### Affluence, Industry, and the City

The relationship between American big business and conservative Protestants has a long history, as Bethany Moreton points out in her book *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*. In the 1970s, she states, Wal-Mart supported the Christian shopper by sanitizing the store from possible objections and decorating in a no-frills manner in accordance with the expectations in Protestant culture.<sup>133</sup> In other situations, big business sponsored pro-American publications that supported the Protestant work ethic and American

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<sup>130</sup> Laurel Hicks, Mike Davis, *Foot Prints The Christian Reading Series* (Pensacola, Florida: A Beka Books, 1980), 61. “The Proud Oak Tree,” 62.

<sup>131</sup> Laurel Hicks and Mike Davis, *Flags Unfurled*, (Pensacola, Florida: A Beka Books), 37. “What to Pray For” by Phillips Brooks.

<sup>132</sup> Rhyllis Rand, Beverly Rainey, and Mike Davis, *Of America Vol. II*, (Pensacola, FL: A Beka Book Publications, 1975), 31. Another quotation on the same page reads: “But I am filled with amazement, when I am told, that, in this enlightened age and in the heart of the Christian world, there are persons who can witness this daily manifestation of the power and wisdom of the Creator, and yet say in their hearts, ‘There is no God.’” – “The Glories of Morning” by Edward Everett

<sup>133</sup> Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 2009), 88, 92.

exceptionalism, the same ideas that flourished in Christian school educational material. The Humble Oil and Refining Company, for instance, allowed the use of their paintings depicting historical episodes to be used in the book *Highlights of American History*, published in 1968. This book could be found among material acceptable for Christian schools.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, big business throughout the twentieth century was commonly a friend to the conservative Protestant, but the relationship was not so comfortable in the 1970s.

Due in part to their rejection of “godless communism,” preachers in the 1970s legitimized wealth but almost always with the strong caveat that it must be used responsibly, and they warned congregants about the dangers of affluence. Throughout his career, Pastor W.A. Criswell repeatedly demeaned devotion to material wealth and enjoyed repeating the story about the Texas oilman who loved money so much he was buried in his gold-plated Cadillac. In Criswell’s folksy way, he concluded the anecdote sarcastically by quoting a bystander at the funeral who marveled, “Man ain’t that living?”<sup>135</sup> During his tenure at Bellevue Baptist Church, Pastor Adrian Rogers repeated his sermon on wealth titled “A Man and His Money,” in which he stated the rich could be saintly but must get through the gates of Heaven on their hands and knees.<sup>136</sup> Francis Schaeffer delivered entire sermons warning against greed but then sent his son Franky

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<sup>134</sup> Ian McMahan, *Highlights of American History*, (New York: Golden Press, 1968).

<sup>135</sup> This story was a favorite of Criswell's and he repeated it when the subject matter suited him. For example, he used the story during a sermon on Oct. 10, 1993 and at least as far back as March 23, 1967. W.A. Criswell library

<sup>136</sup> Adrian Rogers, “A Man and His Money,” June 11, 1978, Adrian Rogers’s Sermon Library.

on fundraising trips to the homes of the very wealthy.<sup>137</sup> Instead of feeling the need to preach against the love of money, Pat Robertson thought Christians were simply not interested in it in the first place: "...we realize that materialism is not the answer.... Our very souls cry out for more, and in this cry not only do I sense a reaction against materialism, but the beginning of a deep groundswell of spiritual revival."<sup>138</sup> In 1977 he vilified the wealthy, writing "The very rich have never paid their fair share of taxes....They have intangible drilling deductions, depletion deductions, feed lot operations, capital gains rates, investment tax credits, off-shore trusts, and on and on."<sup>139</sup> The same year he accused the Rockefellers of picking American officials.<sup>140</sup> In 1975 Billy Graham revealed his disgust with American greed in his sermon "The Economics of the Apocalypse," which he bravely delivered at the American Bankers Association's annual convention in Hawaii. He implored Christians to be concerned with stewardship and brotherly love instead of fixated on continuing in the money-loving environment of a post-World War II America.<sup>141</sup> Graham even suggested citizens practice a cleaner form of existence akin to the Puritan way of life, reflecting the overarching conservative

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<sup>137</sup> Francis Schaeffer, "Christ's Temptation and Ours. – a sermon about materialism," leftover sermons from *No Little People*, 1974. Francis Schaeffer Collection, WCA.

<sup>138</sup> Pat Robertson, "As I View It: God's Thanksgiving Feast," (Christian Broadcasting Network Publication, November 1975), 2.

<sup>139</sup> Pat Robertson, Pat Robertson's Perspective, (Christian Broadcasting Network, May 1977), 1. RUA.

<sup>140</sup> Pat Robertson, Pat Robertson's Perspective, (Christian Broadcasting Network, February 1977), 1.

<sup>141</sup> Billy Graham, "The Economics of the Apocalypse," *The Hour of Decision*, The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 1975. BGA.

Protestant theme validating the rewarding struggle against wilderness for subsistence on the frontier.<sup>142</sup>

Like other church leaders, Falwell rebuked people who were “slaves” to money while his organizations received funds through big business in the 1970s. In 1974 he attempted to attract larger donations from those in his audience who worked for Pennzoil, Alcorp, Mobil, and Nationwide Insurance because these companies promised to match their employees’ donations. Quaker Oats went further by contributing three times the original gift.<sup>143</sup> From his early career as a pastor in the 1950s, before he made the transition to strongly worded political sermons, Falwell openly denounced communism, but made sure to caution against materialism and profit. In his 1976 sermon “The Right Stance towards Finance” he rebuked those who would not work for money but warned: “How dangerous in this materialistic age to become a slave to the greenback. People who work day and night and moonlight in two and three jobs and neglect their families and God—no time to go to church – to me it is sinful.” By the late 1970s Falwell had produced short books for the public in hopes of saving the family and nation from destruction. In these publications he listed and explained social problems and offered suggestions on how to fix them. His 1978 book *How You Can Help Clean Up America* targeted divorce, alcoholism, parental neglect, abortion and homosexuality.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Jerry Falwell, Untitled Sermon, September 15, 1974, FM 3:4 Box 7, Series 9: Evening Transcripts, Unit 1: OTGH# 101, LUA.



Embracing capitalism as an American virtue was not included. Instead he wrote, “...materialism has promoted a false sense of values.”<sup>144</sup>

Throughout the 1970s the conservative Protestant community occasionally supported environmental protection while pairing the evils of evolution with industrialization, a theme closely connected to free enterprise and profit. Engineering professor Henry M. Morris left his position at Virginia Tech University in 1970 and two years later helped found the Institute for Creation Research. The organization produced a monthly publication titled the *Impact Series* in which the authors, most of whom held graduate degrees from accredited secular schools, argued primarily against evolution but sometimes moved into other issues, including traditional family values as well as the environment.

In April of 1974 Morris promoted a strong Christian environmentalist view praising nature as “God’s unique handiwork” and stated that remedies for pollution can be found in “a sound creationist philosophy.”<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, he blamed secular science and industry, writing “Ecological problems developed entirely within a period when the scientific and industrial establishments were totally committed to an evolutionary philosophy!”<sup>146</sup> While making a reference to the energy crisis, Morris went so far as to criticize the burning of fossil fuels, directly stating that “...these organisms were not designed to serve as fuels for man’s machines, and it is not surprising that the efficiency

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<sup>144</sup> Jerry Falwell, *How You Can Help Clean Up America* (Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1979), 20.

<sup>145</sup> Henry M. Morris, “Creation and the Environment” *ICR Impact Series*, no. 13 (April 1974). Hall-Hoag Collection, BUA.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

of heat engines using them is low and the waste products are high. Furthermore, they are exhaustible and even now, the imminent end of economic oil and gas production is matter of great concern.”<sup>147</sup> He also suggested that the burning of such wasteful fuels might hasten Christ’s return.

Later during that same year, Morris curbed his eco-friendly views by drawing the line at population control. He dismissed warnings of overpopulation by quoting Genesis 1:28 and speculated that the earth could hold 50 billion people before it reached maximum capacity. Morris, however, seemed unsure of how to confront the problem. He suggested that before overpopulation occurred, humanity might find technological solutions or Christ might return before humans are forced to disobey the command to be fruitful and multiply. After these speculations, however, he admitted that protecting the environment was a real issue that must be addressed. He again blamed the ecological crisis on evolutionary thought and vilified industry: “...it is very significant that all of earth’s serious environmental problems, even its population crisis, have developed during that one century (say, from about 1860 to the present) when the evolutionary philosophy had replaced creationism in the thinking of practically all of the world’s leaders in education, science and industry.”<sup>148</sup>

Within the conservative Protestant community, the idea of industry as an evil was connected to the perception of the city as a place of vice, greed, affluence and rot. In

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid. Additionally he wrote that in large quantities, these pollutants are too much for the environment and “initiate various abnormal reactions which accelerate and accentuate environmental decay.”

<sup>148</sup> Henry M. Morris, “Evolution and the Population Problem,” *ICR Impact Series*, no. 21 (Dec. 1974), Hall-Hoag Collection. BUA.

1977 two Christians, Peter Marshall and David Manuel, decided to write a history geared for high school students in hopes of saving the nation, titling it *The Light and the Glory: Did God have a Plan for America?* Similarly to the “Of America” series, they directly told parents their motivations: “Until about fifteen years ago... America’s moral and fiscal currency was the soundest in the world.... And then, with a suddenness that is still bewildering, everything went out of balance.” They went on to mention the JFK assassination and the student riots against authority, and wondered what spawned hatred of the United States among foreign countries. The solution, they argued, was repenting and getting America back to God, and the proof that it worked could be found in American history. Like published material by A Beka Books, *The Light and the Glory* communicated the idea that wilderness offered hardship and produced God-fearing Americans.<sup>149</sup> At the same time, the authors demonized the city as the lair of the lazy and the rich as in the case of London, England, which spawned robbers and merchants in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The latter vocation was especially vilified. “For in a godless society, when it is possible to send out a ship and have it return with a cargo worth more than the ship itself... money becomes almost divine.... If, as Paul wrote to Timothy, the love of money is the root of all evil, that might explain some of the other

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<sup>149</sup> Peter Marshall and David Manuel, *The Light and the Glory*, (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Revell, 1977), 134. The authors wrote “Something special had been born among them in the midst of all the dying - they had shared the loved of Jesus Christ in a way that only happens when people are willing to suffer together in His causes. This was what they had come to the wilderness to find, and now none of them wished to leave it.” On page 136 they continued, “But if they had learned one thing through their travails, it was to trust God implicitly.”

evils at London's heart."<sup>150</sup> The city was contrasted with the purifying landscape of the New World. "America was obviously the right place - virginal, wild, as yet untainted by the godless corruption that had befouled the known world..."<sup>151</sup>

*The Light and the Glory* gave conservative Protestants exactly what they wanted. It succinctly aided in the creation of a Christian American identity by tracing the roots of U.S. history to the Mayflower, which carried, in the minds of conservative Protestants, their religious ancestors who left the trappings of an easier life to carve out a shining city on a hill. Jerry Falwell trumpeted the book as one of the best available histories, stating that it proved America was a chosen nation "raised up by God to be a base for world evangelization."<sup>152</sup> In other instances he complained that even churches located in urban areas were known to succumb to the vice of gambling ("dens of iniquity") by hosting bingo games.<sup>153</sup>

Further warnings against avarice and greed beamed through the 1974 version of a story featured in A Beka Books' *Liberty Trees* titled "The Greedy Shepherd." The story's two characters were named Clutch and Kind. Clutch hoarded his money and was driven by it to such an extreme that he did not care for the wellbeing of his sheep and sheared them too closely, leaving them cold. A similar message was communicated in

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 147-148.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>152</sup> Jerry Falwell, "Back to School Special" August 24, 1979, LUA. Beyond Falwell praising the book – something he rarely did with educational material, a religious right sympathizer thought it was important enough to send to born again Charismatic Christian James G. Watt once he took the position of Secretary of the Interior during the Reagan Administration. Letter written by Mr. Ernest E. Thurlow to James Watt, Nov. 30, 1981. James Watt Collection. UWA.

<sup>153</sup> Jerry Falwell, Untitled Sermon, MW-102, June 1, 1977. FM -3-4: 18.

the same book through the story “How I served My Apprenticeship as a Businessman” by Andrew Carnegie.

“People moan about poverty as a great evil; and it seems to be an accepted belief that if people only had plenty of money, they would be happy and useful and get more out of life. As a rule, there is more genuine satisfaction in life and more obtained from life in the humble cottages of the poor man than in the palaces of the rich. I always pity the sons and daughters of rich men, who are attended by servants, and have governesses at a later age; at the same time I am glad to think that they do not know what they have missed.”<sup>154</sup>

The A Beka Books editors altered this passage in 1998 to wash out negative views of the rich.<sup>155</sup>

Similar anti-wealth messages could be seen in other aspects of conservative Protestant culture throughout the 1970s such as *Eternity* and *Christianity Today* articles after the energy crisis. The pieces promoted thriftiness as a good quality in “Are We Living in Post-America? Maybe the Lord of the universe is trying to tell us something.” This 1974 article clearly warned of America’s gluttony while stating that natural resources were rapidly being depleted.<sup>156</sup> Later that year, the magazine ran another article, “The Three Faces of the Energy Crisis,” which pointed out how much Americans

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<sup>154</sup> This quotation was originally from an edited book of Carnegie’s writings titled *The Gospel of Wealth, and Other Essays* under the heading “How I served my Apprenticeship” first published in 1962.

<sup>155</sup> See Chapter Five page 93.

<sup>156</sup> W. Glyn Evans, “Are We Living in Post-America?” *Eternity* 25. no. 12. (December 1974), 25.

consume and asked Christians to cut down a little for the common good. “This ‘crisis’ is a chance to trim some of the sillier luxuries from our culture, and in many ways it may be a blessing in disguise. As a test of faith, it is a small test.”<sup>157</sup> Various articles like these reflected the overall need to reduce energy and the conservative Protestant world embraced the idea at least in thought. This “test” from God was not unlike how the Christian school educational material portrayed the pioneers who created farms out of the wilderness. Some of the other titles from conservative Protestant magazines in the 1970s and early 1980s that touched on the same issues included: “Smile when the Fuel Runs Low;”<sup>158</sup> “Can You Live Simply in North America?: A Cross Section of Readers Tell How They Cut Back;”<sup>159</sup> “Waste as a Wrong;”<sup>160</sup> “Saving Energy Dollars by Design;”<sup>161</sup> “The Pastor’s ‘Beer Can Boiler;’”<sup>162</sup> and “Trapped! By Two Cars, Three Bedrooms and a Color TV.”

Falwell blamed wealth for starting the counterculture and social movements of the late 1960s. “[U]sually the richer the homes the poorer the homes. That’s pretty much the situation in the country. You will find that the leaders, during the 1960s, of the campus rebellions and the marches and the campus burners, were very wealthy young

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<sup>157</sup> Donald Barnhouse, “The Three Faces of the Energy Crisis” *Eternity* 1974. P16-18

<sup>158</sup> Marvin Wilson, “Smile When the Fuel Runs Low,” *Eternity* 25, no. 3 (March 1974): 14, 15, 56.

<sup>159</sup> Suzi Crane, “Can You Live Simply in North America? A Cross Section of Readers Tell How They Cut Back” *Eternity* 30, no. 4 (April 1979): 20.

<sup>160</sup> Harold Lindsell, “Waste as a Wrong,” *Christianity Today* XIX, no. 14 (April 11, 1975): 26.

<sup>161</sup> Nancy Barcus, “Saving Energy Dollars by Design,” *Christianity Today* XXIV, no. 14 (August 8, 1980): 20.

<sup>162</sup> James Reapsome, “The Pastor’s ‘Beer Can Boiler,’” *Christianity Today* XXIV, no. 14 (August 8, 1980): 23.

people, from very high and powerful families....”<sup>163</sup> Wealth led people to challenge Godly traditional norms, creating what conservative Protestants felt was a cancer on society. This idea was closely connected to their perceptions of the rotting cities, which they believed had historical precedents. Falwell said when explaining the fall of Rome, “They got wealthy, they got wise, they got powerful, and they corrupted from within.”<sup>164</sup> Francis Schaeffer promoted similar views in his documentary *How Should We Then Live?* The series began with pictures of violence and strife, many of which were situated in urban areas. The first scene focused on Schaeffer walking down a dark lonely street in an unnamed city. Men loitered in the background wearing heavy coats, appearing and then receding into the darkness and wilderness of alleyways. In contrast, Schaeffer looked analogous to a founding father wearing breeches and knee-high socks, his long grey hair slicked back. The point of the documentary was to explain how present-day society was ruining American civilization, and the streets of the city worked perfectly as a case in point. Schaeffer easily symbolized a past Christian America who had the answer to restore the nation to a former glory by reconnecting to its religious roots.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Jerry Falwell, Untitled Sermon, June, 1, 1977, MW-102: 14. LUA. Earlier on the page he refers to these wealthy homes as “soft homes.”

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 10. When speaking about the collapse of the home and America in general, Falwell blamed people: “And this is the way a sophisticated society sins. It’s the way Sodom and Gomorrah did it. It is the way Tyre and Sidon did it. It is the way the Greeks did it. It’s the way the Romans did it. They got wealthy, they got wise, they got powerful, and they corrupted from within.”

<sup>165</sup> The 1678 book *The Pilgrims Progress*, reprinted by A Beka Books in the 1970s, has similar themes regarding the value of wilderness and the danger of the city. In the A Beka version, the main character named Christian must leave the City of Destruction to embark on a journey through the wilderness to find out how to be saved. On his escape from the city, his friends named Obstinate and Pliable attempt to convince him to stay,

While warnings against affluence, industrialization, and the city circulated among conservative Protestants, their Christian educational material reminded students not to abuse or overuse the natural world. Although the authors stayed away from topics such as population control or the dangers of toxic waste, they communicated a strong message of conservation by highlighting the value of ecosystems and forest sustainability while warning about the dangers of abuse. Visible in the prose is also an emotional attachment to nature. *Exploring God's World*, for example, published in 1976 for third-graders, cautioned readers about humanity's ability to ruin what God created. "To man, the tree is a friend that provides him with lumber to build. But man can also be tree's worst enemy. In places where man has cut down too many trees, the soil begins to wash away. The wildlife that used these trees as homes must find other homes.... Trees are one of God's wonderful gifts to us, and we should take care of them."<sup>166</sup> For second-graders, conservation was not focused on so heavily, but materials still stressed nature appreciation and the importance of a healthy ecosystem.<sup>167</sup>

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but he separates himself from them and marches on through obstacles in nature such as the Swamp of Despair in hopes of attaining his spiritual goal.

<sup>166</sup> Judy Hull Moore, Stan Shimmin, *Exploring God's World*, (Pensacola, Florida: A Beka Books, 1976), 122.

<sup>167</sup> Judy Hull; Stan Shimmin, Steve Glover, *Enjoying God's World*, (Pensacola, Florida: A Beka Books, 1976), 122. "The Bible says, 'he hath made everything beautiful and in his time' Ecclesiastes 3:11." A short chapter followed describing how the food chain and ecosystem function.



## The New Right

While the conservative Protestant community developed an understanding of Christian American nationalism throughout the 1970s, another fervently ambitious engine emerged, organized by individuals of the secular right who made it their mission to curb the late 1960s social changes and restore the nation to its strength. These people included Paul Weyrich, the founder of two conservative special purpose groups, the Heritage Foundation (1973) and the Free Congress Foundation (1977).<sup>168</sup> Another national conservative advocate, Phyllis Schlafly founded the Eagle Forum in 1974 primarily to fight the Equal Rights Amendment. For the most part, they stayed separate from what Falwell was doing throughout the 1970s, but their views remained attractive to the conservative Protestant community and sometimes the special purpose groups used Christian arguments to promote their causes.

Unlike conservative Protestants, these special purpose groups strongly promoted free enterprise. However, the negative perception of money among the former group was apparently so strong that some secular conservatives felt it could not be altered. Richard Viguerie, a successful fundraiser for far-right causes and founder of the *Conservative Digest* (1975), realized in 1975 that the promotion of free enterprise was not an issue of the blue-collar worker. He concluded, however, that this group held values similar to traditional conservatives (GOP members), including feelings against

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<sup>168</sup> Originally the Free Congress Foundation was known as The Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress.

busing, gun control and abortion. He reasoned that if traditional conservatives could drop or compromise their love for free enterprise and hatred for labor unions, then the GOP could restructure itself into a “New Majority.”<sup>169</sup> It is clear that conservative Protestants were included in Viguerie’s political vision. In 1978, the effort to forge this alliance was evident by his “new right” fostering pro-family events such as protesting the International Women’s Year conference in Houston. It was reported by the *Wall Street Journal* that the demonstration attracted 11,000 who rallied against the conference’s support for the Equal Rights Amendment.<sup>170</sup>

Instead of secular conservatives abandoning their torch for free enterprise, conservative Protestants at the grassroots level grew familiar with the idea of big business and free enterprise by reading the material produced by far-right special purpose groups. For example, sporadic pro-free-enterprise messages combined with anti-environmentalism were witnessed in mass publications like the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*. Although her primary target was the ERA, the rhetoric covered a wide variety of issues refuting the power of large government. Nothing was off limits, including

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<sup>169</sup> Alan Crawford, “Richard Viguerie’s Bid for Power,” *The Nation*. (Jan 29, 1977): 106. Paul Weyrich Collection. University of Wyoming Archives (hereafter cited UWA).

<sup>170</sup> James P. Gannon, “Coalition Politics on the Right,” *The Wall St. Journal*, January 3, 1978. 10137, Folder 10, Box 23, Richard A. Viguerie Company. Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (hereafter cited as SBHLA). This article also repeated the earlier feelings by Viguerie that traditional Republicans needed to drop their pro-big business, free enterprise feelings if they were to make the New Majority effective in the next election. (Richard Viguerie’s Bid for Power” by Alan Crawford in *The Nation*. Jan 29, 1977: 106, UWA)

rejecting a law requiring seatbelt fastening in cars.<sup>171</sup> Among the issues discussed in 1974, she blamed the government for “caving” to “environmental radicals” and limiting the exploration and development of American oil reserves. The consequence, she stated, was a continuation of a needless shortage of energy.<sup>172</sup> At the same time she promoted values attractive to the conservative Protestant community, praising the McGuffey readers and demeaning the value of material riches.<sup>173</sup> In another instance, Paul Weyrich praised the author William Rusher, who published his book *The Making of the New Majority Party* in 1975. Weyrich applauded Rusher’s support of ordinary Americans who stood against the liberal agenda, including California loggers who “recognized the idiocy of extremist environmentalists.”<sup>174</sup>

By the late 1970s the argument among these publications had increasingly become more caustic towards environmentalism while arguing the importance of free enterprise. It is debatable how much of this material was actually read in the common Christian home, but most likely conservative church members were familiar with it like fundamentalist Harold Lindsell, the editor for *Christianity Today*, who subscribed to

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<sup>171</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* (Oct. 1974). Hall-Hoag Collection. Brown University Archives (hereafter cited BUA).

<sup>172</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, “Solving the Oil Crisis,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, 7 no. 9 (April 1974). Hall-Hoag Collection. BUA.

<sup>173</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, “Medications on Morality,” *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, 7 no. 5 (December 1973). Hall-Hoag Collection. 557/2/1. BUA. “God, patriotism, thrift, honesty, respect for elders, where there’s a will there’s away, the golden rule, true courage, manliness, kindness to the less fortunate, obedience to parents, the value of prayer, the consequences of idleness and truancy, crime doesn’t pay, and why virtue and love are worth more than material riches.”

<sup>174</sup> Paul Weyrich, review of *Making of the New Majority Party* by William Rusher. Retyped copy by Elaine Hartman to Sheed & Ward Inc. June 4, 1975. 10138, Folder 13, Box 21. Personal File – Paul Weyrich. UWA.

*America's Future* from 1978 to 1981. In December of 1978 this conservative newsletter featured an article titled "Nature as a Pollution Source." The author accused the EPA of covering up a recent study that proved eighty percent of pollution comes "not from cars and smokestacks but from plants and trees."<sup>175</sup> Nevertheless, Lindsell's views towards the environment did not change at least through most of the 1970s. This is in accordance with his past feelings towards consumerism and compassion towards God's creation. In 1976, for example, Lindsell urged fellow Christians to conserve earth's resources by not buying food or using energy on the weekends.<sup>176</sup>

In the late 1970s the secular conservatives and the conservative Protestants who became the religious right had yet to officially meet and become allies. As in the example of Lindsell, however, it is clear that some in the religious community read material like *America's Future* and at the same time secular conservatives, including Richard Viguerie, possessed desires to court the fundamentalists and evangelicals as a possible GOP voting demographic. The looming merger would put into question conservative Protestant pride in thriftiness and rural America by injecting a secular love for capitalism into the developing understanding of Christian American nationalism.

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<sup>175</sup> *America's Future* Vol 20 No. 25 December 29, 1978: 5 CN 192. Folder: *America's Future*, Box 1; 1978-1981. Harold Lindsell. WCA.

<sup>176</sup> Harold Lindsell, "Lord's Day and Natural Resources," *Christianity Today* 20, no 16 (1976): 816-20.

## Conclusion

“And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make one farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury.”<sup>177</sup> Every conservative Protestant who grew up attending Sunday school knows this story. During Falwell’s “Patriotic Day” service, Doug Oldham told an updated version of it by making the widow endorse Thomas Road Baptist Church with the donation of her husband’s last dollar. Her gift, however, was specifically for the church’s schools that promised a new generation of Christians who identified with the “right kind” of America, a concept later explained by the “I Love America” program. Who would not want to be associated with a present-day biblical heroine who gave her beloved husband’s “last” dollar in an attempt to stand up against the detrimental social movements tearing the country apart? The idea of joining arms with other frugal and self-sustaining godly Americans was very attractive and it was in line with the message Falwell and other Christians presented to their audiences, which built a romantic history of a pre-industrial Christian America when people lived in accordance with their proper place in God’s creation.

The problem with championing a past agrarian America however, is that it was, simply, the past. The frontier had been considered closed since the late nineteenth

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<sup>177</sup> Mark 12: 41-43 (King James Version)

century and citizens had left the farms in favor of industrial jobs and a consumer economy. Conservative Protestants would have to attain their goal of “restoring America” to somehow function in the present day; thus, their message had to change or at least be updated. A possible answer to this problem came from special purpose groups who knocked on the door offering conservative reading material like *America’s Future*. Publications like this sounded similar to those coming from their own community, but conservative Protestants would have to let go of their awkward feelings towards consumer culture.

Although Christian American nationalism needed updating, a solid foundation was laid during the 1970s, much of which continues to the present day. Falwell was one of the first to push an appealing version of it in his church services. The educational material in the 1970s coming from A Beka Books explained the details to conservative Protestant youth and the idea caught on throughout the rest of the community. Pastor Adrian Rogers gave his first of many patriotic sermons in 1977. The idea of a pro-America sermon was perhaps encouraged by a desire to be a participant in the bicentennial in 1976, but Falwell and Rogers were not celebrating America. They were warning Christians that the nation was rapidly decaying. Roger’s 1977 sermon title “Is There Still Time for America” speaks for itself.

What is additionally noteworthy about the issue of the environment within the conservative Protestant community is what was *not* said about it. Among all the social movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, including the Vietnam protests, women’s liberation, gay rights, flower power, as well as everything else that was changing, such

as fashion and music – the one new development that was not addressed by Christian American nationalism was the environmental movement. Encouragement to protect God’s earth dwindled among the conservative Protestant leadership after Earth Day, but even the secular environmental movement was not vilified to anywhere near the same degree as all the other social movements. The idea of Christian environmental stewardship survived in very important areas within the conservative Protestant community such as Christian school educational material and the ICR.

Furthermore, John Burroughs’s story “The Bluebird” featured in the *Liberty Tree* cannot be written off as an oversight on the part of the editors. The fact it was included is evidence that dislike of the environmental movement by conservative Protestants right after Earth Day had failed to become a salient feeling in the community. Thus, conservative Protestants were free to use ideas of the natural world to help them construct a Christian American nationalism that made them a central part of the nation’s history and gave them hope for a better future. At least throughout the 1970s their enemy was not the environmental movement. During this decade, the importance of economics did not eclipse the value of nature and in many instances money was associated with greed, industrialization and the city. Unlike Graham, who dismissed the ecological crisis as a non-issue in 1972, Falwell recognized it as a real concern throughout most of the decade. However, as the New Christian Right came to fruition in 1979, views regarding nature protection along with free enterprise underwent major alterations within the imaginings of what makes up a Christian America.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MORAL MAJORITY FINDS FAVOR IN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

Environmental protection is rarely, if ever, considered as being associated with the political mobilization of conservative Protestants from the period of the late 1970s to 1989. Scholars such as Robert Booth Fowler explained the lack of connection by concluding that conservative Protestants traditionally either ignored the issue or dismissed nature as a simple resource to be used for the benefit of mankind. In a similar manner, graduate student David Larsen paired them briefly to show that fundamentalists learned to distrust environmentalists by reading an evangelical conspiracy bestseller titled *Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow*. There are aspects of truth to Fowler and Larsen's interpretations, but they only revealed a fraction of a complicated story. Further investigation demonstrates that from the late 1970s to 1989, those who became the religious right were in the process of developing a fierce love of free enterprise, which sometimes conflicted, but surprisingly most often co-existed with the group's previously established eco-friendly sentiments. The pro-environmental feelings, however, never became an official position, but remained dominant despite mumblings to the contrary. Religious right heavyweights, for instance, including Pat Robertson and the Christian educational publishers, exhibited pro-environmental sentiments despite rising challenges from the increasing role of capitalism within their politics. Perhaps one of the best examples revealing the mixed discussion on the subject, which helps set the tone of the



conversation regarding the environment and the economy, was witnessed at an energy crisis conference organized by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in 1977.

The Southern Baptist Convention is today the second largest Christian organization in the United States after the Catholic Church. It originated in 1845 when a group of independent Baptist churches broke off from those in the North following a resolution forbidding slave-owners from becoming ordained missionaries. Each church in the SBC writes their own doctrine; they decide how much money to donate and in fact whether or not they wish to remain a member. The chief advantage in unification is to fund seminaries that produce missionaries through what is known as the Cooperative Program. The SBC is also able to produce and disseminate Baptist literature through different organizations such as the Sunday School Board.<sup>178</sup> In the early twentieth century controversy arose among members concerning the interpretation of the scriptures. The two conflicting sides were labeled conservatives and moderates. Conservatives argued the Bible should be taught as the infallible word of God and inerrant throughout. Moderates too, believed the Bible is the word of God, but felt areas of scripture may be left open to interpretation and some Bible stories did not necessarily happen as fact. Deeper within this conflict is the perception that those in the conservative faction push religious right issues into the SBC. Nevertheless, even with disagreement causing noticeable rifts among the participants, the Convention continues

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<sup>178</sup> The Sunday School Board was originally founded in 1891 and now operates under the name of LifeWay.

today as a community rich in opinions on a diverse range of subjects. During the late 1970s the SBC discussed energy conservation and Christian environmental stewardship.

It was in Nashville, Tennessee on August 22-23, 1977 that a SBC subgroup, the Christian Life Commission (CLC) held a meeting titled “The Energy Crisis and the Churches: Proceedings of a Consultation.” David Sapp, who worked under Executive Secretary Foy Valentine, invited a handful of Southern Baptists representing different churches and organizations. Each presented a paper discussing the energy crisis and offering solutions. The church that invested the most to combat the problem was the First Baptist Church of Dallas, pastored by fundamentalist W.A. Criswell. The church’s representative John Starks delivered the conference paper giving a detailed report of the church’s actions. He pointed out that in 1973, at the beginning of the energy crisis, First Baptist Church spent \$100,000 on utility bills, which increased to \$200,000 by 1976; if nothing was done, expenses could reach \$400,000 by 1981. To have greater control over the energy used, Starks reported, they installed a central computer programmed to shut off lights, and control heat, air conditioning, and alarm maintenance when there were problems. It was clear that Starks focused on conservation for financial reasons, although he initially stated that stewardship should be present in all aspects of life.<sup>179</sup> Although Criswell did not personally attend, his letter was featured on a promotional poster printed by the CLC. The letter stated that although the number of meetings and

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<sup>179</sup> “Responses of First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas,” by John Starks, Former Minister of Business Administration, First Baptist Church, Dallas. p. 20. In *The Energy Crisis and the Churches: Proceedings of a Consultation*, Sponsored by The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, Tennessee, Folder: Energy - 1983. 63-1. SBHLA.

functions held by the church would not be cut, the congregation had organized to find new ways to conserve resources. Criswell concluded, “We shall be happy to have a part in making our dear church an example to the whole world as good stewards of the manifold gifts of God.”<sup>180</sup>

One who was most supportive of Christian environmental stewardship for having the health of the earth in mind was Cecil A. Ray, General Secretary of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Raleigh. One of his two presentations was titled “What Baptist Churches Can Do,” in which he listed the possible actions for “responsible Christian stewardship.” This included “The stewardship message of responsible use of God’s creation.” He wrote, “God created both man and the material universe, He saw both as good... Man’s instructions to ‘subdue, dominate’ were never a license to exploit or destroy. By divine assignment, man is a conservationist.”<sup>181</sup>

The consultation also featured an economically based argument by Gilbert Turner, who titled his paper “Responses of a Baptist Businessman.” Turner took a defensive stance, stating that it was wrong to blame the business world for the energy crisis and the depletion of natural resources. He complained that people of their time refused to work and instead wanted free handouts, while regulations led to inflation. If companies were allowed the freedom they once had, which Turner claimed made the

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<sup>180</sup> Poster, “What have we paid for utilities in 1976, What will we have to pay then for 1977 thru 1981?” W.A. Criswell letter to Church Members April 21, 1977. SBHLA.

<sup>181</sup> “What Baptist Churches Can do” by Cecil A. Ray, General Secretary Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, Raleigh, North Carolina, in *The Energy Crisis and the Churches: Proceedings of a Consultation*, Sponsored by The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, Tennessee: 51, Folder: Energy -1983 63-1. SBHLA.

United States great, then individuals would voluntarily conserve resources and businessmen would find solutions “in a manner that will enable our great grandchildren to look upon the present-day crisis in much the same manner as we now view the whale-oil crisis of the nineteenth century.”<sup>182</sup> Apparently, he was not concerned that multiple whale species were brought to the brink of extinction as a consequence of commercial whaling. Instead his thoughts centered on what kind of oil would replace the diminishing supply. Free enterprise, he thought, would get the job done.

Before and after the consultation, opinions in the larger SBC were just as mixed as the papers delivered. Texas Baptist Convention President James G. Harris and Executive Director James H. Landes labeled the energy crisis a spiritual matter, telling followers to reduce energy use – not just because of cost, but to conserve the nation’s resources.<sup>183</sup> This argument hinted at protecting more than the environment, suggesting the need to keep the United States strong financially and militarily for the future. This latter approach was likely a response to President’s Carter’s claim that energy conservation was the duty of good citizens, a strategy also used by the Nixon Administration in 1973.<sup>184</sup> Elsewhere at the SBC Colorado General Convention,

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<sup>182</sup> “Responses of a Baptist Businessman” by Gilbert Turner, President of Bortunco of America, Inc. Houston Texas, in *The Energy Crisis and the Churches: Proceedings of a Consultation*, Sponsored by The Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Nashville, Tennessee: 27, Folder: Energy -1983 63-10044. SBHLA.

<sup>183</sup> “Energy Crisis/Cost Prompts Varied Responses” in the Baptist Standard by Mike Bush. Article sent to David Sapp from Foy Valentine on June 3, 1977. Folder: Energy Crisis, 48-10 9830 SBHA.

<sup>184</sup> “What Price Energy?” *Newsweek*, (May 2, 1977): 12. Carter equated conservation with national sacrifice, asking people to reduce their energy use for the good of the country.

resolutions were passed asking churches to take bold steps towards energy reduction, but it is unclear as to their motives. This resolution was followed by several other issues such as a prohibition on pornography and a decision to raise television awareness, important concerns of the future religious right.<sup>185</sup> Some refused to believe an energy crisis existed, such as W.M. Shamburger, Pastor of First Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas. He thought such a concern was a waste of time and felt that Baptists should be saving souls; nevertheless, his congregation made efforts to limit energy use by turning off lights.<sup>186</sup>

While environmental views appear mixed for the SBC, a major figure in the building of the religious right was Pat Robertson, who consistently supported compassionate words for Christian environmental stewardship. During the 1970s, he published a monthly newsletter titled *Pat Robertson's Perspectives*. It consisted of a few pages filled with numerous short paragraphs, each containing musings and reflections regarding a wide spectrum of topics and accompanied with advice. These pages read like privileged information from an insider who explained where the economy was headed and what it meant for investments, while commenting on standard religious right concerns such as traditional family morals, school prayer, and the rejection of homosexuality. Robertson periodically wove Christian environmental stewardship into these published contemplations. In a response to those who doubted

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<sup>185</sup> "Reduce Energy Use, Churches Cautioned" Ohio Baptist Message, December 15, 1977: 3. SBHLA

<sup>186</sup> "Energy Crisis/Cost Prompts Varied Responses" in the Baptist Standard by Mike Bush. Article sent to David Sapp from Foy Valentine on June 3, 1977. Folder: Energy Crisis, 48-10. SBHLA.

the existence or seriousness of the energy crisis, he clarified in May 1977, “The energy crisis is real” and as a solution he promoted the use of nuclear power because he reasoned it did not have the same widespread polluting capabilities as coal. He admitted that the U.S. had a surplus of the commodity, but would rather avoid its use due to fears that American cities would resemble the English industrial centers of Manchester or Liverpool.<sup>187</sup> In further reflection on the matter, Robertson suggested the development of a massive program akin to the Manhattan Project with the objective of figuring out ways to harness new power sources such as the renewables of wind and tides.<sup>188</sup>

While Robertson tried persuading his audience to save the world, Robert M. Morris at the Institute for Creation Research toned down his organization’s views on the topic from their once pro-environmental 1974 position. Morris took a complacent stance by coming to terms with the idea that the earth was dying. He wrote in September of 1978 that the world could die biologically before the sun grows cold. He stated that the hydrosphere and atmosphere were becoming polluted, the soil was eroding, nutrients were being leached away, and food supplies were increasingly contaminated.<sup>189</sup> However, Morris thought, “Long before it reaches ultimate death, God will intervene and ‘the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.’ (Romans 8:21).”<sup>190</sup> This is

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<sup>187</sup> Pat Robertson, *Pat Robertson’s Perspectives*, (Christian Broadcasting Network, May 1977). RUA.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Henry M. Morris, “The Remarkable Re-Birth of Planet Earth,” ICR Impact Series, no. 63 (September 1978):1. Hall-Hoag Collection. BUA.

<sup>190</sup> *ibid.*, 2

one of the few examples where someone in the conservative Protestant community decided to be at peace with a dying world based on premillennialist beliefs.

Others in the community, including devoted fundamentalist Harold Lindsell, perused right-wing newsletters such as *America's Future*, which strongly stood in favor of the economy over the health of nature. In a 1979 issue an author pointed out that the Department of Energy had 20,000 employees sapping \$12 billion a year from the taxpayers to devise new regulations that impeded domestic energy development.<sup>191</sup> Additionally, it cited automotive experts who claimed some environmentalists were too unreasonable by supporting federal policies that would force the auto industry to cut hydrocarbon emissions by 90 percent from what they were twelve years previous, thus costing companies billions.<sup>192</sup> In December of 1979 *America's Future* lumped environmentalists with “welfare lobbyists” and “liberal politicians” who, with the help of the federal government, were putting a stranglehold on oil companies.<sup>193</sup>

On October 17, 1980 *America's Future* published a book review of James A. Weber's *Power Grab: The Conserver Cult and Coming Energy Catastrophe*. Weber, the review stated, refused to believe there was any energy shortage. The current situation was only limited energy exploration due to the EPA making drilling illegal in Alaska. The review quoted the author, “Why have our policymakers adopted an energy

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<sup>191</sup> *America's Future* Vol. 21, No. 8, April 20, 1979: 4. CN 192. Folder: America's Future, Box 1; 1978-1981. Harold Lindsell. WCA.

<sup>192</sup> *America's Future* Vol 21, No. 10, May 18, 1979: 1. CN 192. Folder: America's Future, Box 1; 1978-1981. Harold Lindsell. WCA.

<sup>193</sup> *America's Future*, Vol. 21 No. 25 December 1979, CN 192. Folder: America's Future, Box 1; 1978-1981. Harold Lindsell. WCA.

policy which means less rather than more energy?...Instead of economic growth, they are attempting to create an ‘environmental paradise on earth.’”<sup>194</sup> Lindsell marked the following passage in pen.

“The goal of these groups (groups that promoted conservation) is to achieve a society in America similar to that described by E.F. Schumacher in his 1975 book, *Small Is Beautiful: Economics As if People Mattered*. Mr. Weber describes the worldview inherent in this approach as calling ‘for enshrining nature...as sacred, while effectively repealing the Industrial Revolution... The Schumacher vision is beautiful, new world populated by human beings with low-technology, low-energy lifestyles of ‘element frugality’ sustained by the sun and the wind and the earth was just what the doctor ordered for environmentalists.”<sup>195</sup>

Lindsell’s interest in the text was more than just a passing thought. At this time, he was doing research for his upcoming book *Free Enterprise: A Judeo-Christian Defense*, published later in 1982.

Lindsell was a fundamentalist who struggled deeply with the concept and need to safeguard the environment. He first thought Earth Day 1970 was a great idea, but quickly soured on it in response to what he read in *The Environmentalist Handbook*. However, he felt secure with the concept of Christian environmental stewardship, which allowed him to support nature protection while separating Christianity from the secular

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<sup>194</sup> *America’s Future*, Vol .22 No. 20 October 17, 1980, Book review: Power Grab: The Conserver Cult and the Coming Energy Catastrophe by James A. Weber, CN 192. Folder: America’s Future, Box 1; 1978-1981. Harold Lindsell. WCA.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.



environmental movement. He continued endorsing this view throughout the 1970s and went out of his way to personally request *Christianity Today*, of which he was the editor, to interview a fellow Christian Dr. Carl Reidel, who strongly promoted environmental stewardship, specifically for an issue published in tandem with Earth Day.<sup>196</sup> Beyond that, he once asked Christians to stop driving on Sundays to save fuel – advice based not only on economics, but also in response to energy conservation and compassion towards nature.<sup>197</sup> By 1980 Linsell’s opinion on the matter had changed with the influence of pro-free enterprise rhetoric encouraged by but probably not limited to *America’s Future*.<sup>198</sup>

While researching for his book *Free Enterprise*, Linsell found a list of sayings, presumably from Abraham Lincoln, which he felt could be useful. He wrote the Library of Congress to validate its authenticity. The list consisted of classic socially and economically conservative maxims. Two examples include “You cannot further the brotherhood of man by encouraging class hatred” and “You cannot help the wage earner

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<sup>196</sup> Wheaton Archives: 5118 undated note. The interview ran in the April 23, 1971 issue of *Christianity Today*, p 4-8.

<sup>197</sup> Harold Linsell, “Lord’s Day and Natural Resources,” *Christianity Today* 20, no 16 (1976): 816-20.

<sup>198</sup> The Linsell collection at Wheaton College, Ill. does not offer much more in the way of what other elements affected Linsell’s position towards nature. Linsell felt his opinion on current matters was important and thought himself somewhat of an intellectual elite. For example, he felt the need to sway the conservative Protestant conversation regarding the topic of the infallibility of the Bible and wrote *The Battle for the Bible* in 1976. During the same year, he joined a social organization that allowed him to converse with other well-to-do and highly educated Americans by purchasing membership to the Cosmo Club in Washington D.C.

by pulling down the wage payer.”<sup>199</sup> The Library of Congress responded, stating the list dated back to the nineteenth century but Lincoln was “assigned” as author later by the Committee for Constitutional Government, a 1940s organization that strongly opposed Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal measures and court packing plan.<sup>200</sup> Although Lindsell was always strongly anti-communist, he represents the larger conservative Protestant community’s increasing attraction towards embracing secular conservative and, more precisely, free enterprise ideologies. As for Lindsell, at this time he pushed aside his compassion for God’s creation and replaced it with the importance of financial profits. Thus, he found comfort in information disseminated by special purpose groups such as the Committee for Constitutional Government, and in turn was apparently moved by the anti-environmental rhetoric of *America’s Future*.

Lindsell’s disregard for the environment ultimately came through in his 1982 book *Free Enterprise* by declaring one of his intentions was to counter the “arguments constantly heard about the depletion of natural resources, the ruination of the environment, and the need to defuse the propaganda favoring a return to the bucolic life of the farm.”<sup>201</sup> He wrote that God mandated people create wealth and they should not

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<sup>199</sup> Harold Lindsell to The Library of Congress, February 16, 1980. Attached: reply from The Library of Congress. SC 192, Box 2. Folder: A Christian Defense for Free Enterprise Correspondence and First Draft; 1980. WCA.

Folder: A Christian Defense of Free Enterprise Correspondence and first draft; 1980,

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Harold Lindsell, *Free Enterprise: A Judeo-Christian Defense*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1982), 10.

be forced to live simply as advocated by E.F. Schumacher, aping information offered in the 1980 issue of *America's Future* sent to his address.<sup>202</sup>

### The Moral Majority

Conservative Protestants who wanted to mobilize politically finally had their own organization by June of 1979. Howard Phillips, a former Nixon federal appointee, left the GOP and founded The Conservative Caucus in 1974. He worked with other conservative right-wing notables like fundraiser Richard Viguerie and strategist Paul Weyrich. Another acquaintance, a Colgate-Palmolive Company marketing man named Ed McAteer, who founded the conservative Religious Roundtable in 1979, introduced Phillips to Jerry Falwell the same year.<sup>203</sup> Until this time the fledgling religious right functioned largely on its own; support for political mobilization existed but without a formal organization to lead members. Back in 1976 Viguerie had noted the groundswell of conservative Protestant interest in politics through examples such as thousands protesting the ERA in Houston. Preachers like James Robison, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson were undeniably disgusted with the progressive “liberal” and “humanistic”

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., pg 70-72. Lindsell had always hated communism and spoke out openly against it. Examples date back to lectures he gave in the 1960s. However, he did not see a problem with conserving resources until the late 1970s and early 1980s. For 1960s Lindsell views on communism, see Lindsell Collection 192 Audio Tapes T13 (communism and materialism) 1962, WCA.

<sup>203</sup> Ed McAteer was a devout evangelical and member of Bellevue Baptist Church where Adrian Rogers preached. He represents members of the conservative Protestant community who were not leaders at the pulpit, but took it upon themselves to get involved in the religious right.

direction of America since the mid-1970s and consequently fanned the flames of opposition among their followers. In February of 1979 Phillips wrote Falwell, impatiently encouraging him to start a for-profit newspaper and mentioning that Weyrich and a friend should have already given him the go-ahead for the publication.<sup>204</sup> This meeting most likely refers to the first time Weyrich met Falwell in January and urged, in addition to starting a paper, the creation of a supposedly non-partisan organization which required politicians to embrace moral issues. They planned that the group would gain a large following by welcoming members from any denomination or faith. Falwell indeed liked the idea and by June he announced the formation of the Moral Majority.

The Moral Majority did not do the job of Christian pastors by trying to convert people to Christ. Rather it was designed to use the brand of Christian nationalism that Falwell and others had developed in previous years to combat the social changes they were upset about. They also took on a few more unfamiliar issues that Falwell and Robertson did not previously promote with great frequency.<sup>205</sup> The September 15, 1980 issue of *Newsweek* spelled out what the group was for and against. Some of the newer and more secular issues the group took stands on included opposing SALT II and defense cuts while promoting free enterprise and a balanced budget. *Newsweek* stated that although Pat Robertson claimed the religious right should remain bi-partisan, as did

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<sup>204</sup> The Conservative Caucus Research, Analysis & Education, Howard Phillips wrote Falwell on February 27, 1979. Folder 20, Box 15, Christians in Politics, 1978-1979. UWA.

<sup>205</sup> Both Falwell and Robertson supported capitalism, a direct response to their dislike of communism. Falwell would state in sermons that people who could work, but refused to, should starve. However, this was not a top priority in his world outlook and he balanced such views with dislike towards materialism in the 1970s.

Falwell in other sources, events held by McAteer's Religious Roundtable invariably proved pro-GOP.<sup>206</sup>

In August of 1980 the Religious Roundtable invited the most prominent conservative Protestant leaders to speak at the National Affairs Briefing, a rally held in Dallas, Texas designed with the intent of helping followers pick an appropriate presidential candidate in the upcoming election. The list of speakers included Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, W.A. Criswell, Adrian Rogers, and James Robison. The highlight of the evening was for the audience, which numbered about 2,500, to hear directly from GOP nominee Ronald Reagan.<sup>207</sup> President Carter declined the invitation. Falwell's speech covered traditional religious right topics such as the importance of school prayer and the rejection of indecent programs on television. Robertson, who was also at the time a member of the Religious Roundtable, contributed something interesting to the discussion. Although he towed the line with normal religious right talking points, he threw in a message in support of Christian environmental stewardship.

“In the midst of the troubles of the world God says, be fruitful, multiply, take dominion. He says, my people have been called by my name to establish dominion over the earth. He says, subdue it in My name. Not to rape the environment, not to spoil the air and pollute the rivers, but to bring My world to the peace and the harmony and the

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<sup>206</sup> Allan J. Mayer, John J. Lindsay, Howard Fineman, Stryker McGuire, Jonathan Kisch, Michael Reese, “Born-Again Politics,” *Newsweek* (Sept. 15, 1980):28-36. UWA.

<sup>207</sup> David John Marley, *Pat Robertson: An American Life* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2007), 68.

love and the order that I intended for it. And He said, I have given this to those who know my name.”<sup>208</sup>

By broaching the topic at this particular event, Robertson was on uncertain ground. He was adding an issue that his peers did not typically speak about as they did on abortion or traditional family values. Therefore, he prefaced the topic by carefully using the biblical terms ‘dominate’ and ‘subdue,’ which distanced him from the secular environmental movement. However, he defined such words by following in the footsteps of Francis Schaeffer and pre-1982 Lindsell, arguing they were meant to promote compassion towards nature. In short, he safely structured an argument asking the religious community to take action and live in harmony with God’s creation. Here on a national stage in an official role as a leader for the growing religious right, Robertson cautiously advocated for Christian environmental stewardship, an issue that scholars believe this group had ignored or opposed since Earth Day 1970. Although Robertson was careful not to push the matter to the point of making it a top priority, the fact that it surfaced at all in such a public and politically charged setting is remarkable. Furthermore, Robertson was not criticized for his statement.

The speech that proved the most memorable at the National Affairs Briefing was Ronald Reagan’s, who famously declared, “I know that you can’t endorse me, but I want

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<sup>208</sup> Pat Robertson, “National Affairs Speech,” National Affairs Briefing. Dallas, TX. 22, August 1980.

you to know that I endorse you and what you are doing.”<sup>209</sup> This remark symbolically made him the candidate for the New Christian Right and they expected him to fight for their concerns as President of the United States. Although Reagan did not mention the environment that evening, he did criticize Jimmy Carter’s “Energy and National Policy” speech and refused to accept that America must “accept a condition of national ‘malaise.’” Instead he encouraged an optimistic future of plenty. Later that year, during his Presidential nomination address Reagan warned, “Never before in our history have Americans been called upon to face three grave threats to our very existence, any of which could destroy us. We face a disintegrating economy, a weakened defense, and an energy policy based on the sharing of scarcity.” He made it clear that conservation was a luxury that came second to economic prosperity: “...conservation is desirable... but it is not the sole answer to our energy needs... economic prosperity of our people is a fundamental part of our environment.”<sup>210</sup>

During the 1980s Robertson did not alter his environmental views to follow or show support for Reagan. While Reagan won the nomination, Robertson again promoted environmental stewardship, writing, “If we refuse to make drastic cuts in our energy use, here is what lies ahead:... The substitution of more hazardous energy sources for oil and gas will present us with unacceptable environmental problems --- air pollution, acid rain, aesthetic degradation or radiation hazards – which could menace

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<sup>209</sup> Martin, William, *With God On Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, Broadway Books, 1996), 217.

<sup>210</sup> Ronald Reagan, Alfred A. Balitzer, Gerald M. Bonetto, *A Time for Choosing: The Speeches of Ronald Reagan 1961-1982* (Chicago, Regnery Gateway), 223-224.

entire populations.”<sup>211</sup> Robertson echoed his National Affairs Briefing speech in his magazine, *Flame*: “Have we created a Frankenstein with our advanced technologies? Man has raped the earth of its natural resources, polluted the air, poisoned the waters and exhausted our energy supplies through greed and indifference.”<sup>212</sup> He advised his readers to pray to God that they might become “... a better steward of earth’s resources, as well as our personal resources.”<sup>213</sup>

The same year as the National Affairs Briefing, a Baptist preacher named Lindsey Williams published a book titled *The Energy Non-Crisis*. Lindsey described himself as a simple chaplain who traveled to Alaska to offer spiritual guidance to the workers on the Trans-Alaska pipeline in the 1970s. The companies declined his assistance when he arrived, but he persevered and after a short time he was allowed to preach. Williams wrote that he befriended those at the management level who educated him on their situation. In the promotional pamphlets for the upcoming book, he wrote, “At one time I too thought there was an energy crisis. After all, that was what I had been told by the news media and by the Federal Government.... Then as I heard, saw and experienced what you are about to read, I realized that there is no energy crisis. There is no need for America to go cold, or for gas to be rationed.”<sup>214</sup> The pamphlet and the book told of a visit from former Senator Hugh M. Chance who Williams claimed was an

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<sup>211</sup> Pat Robertson, *Pat Robertson’s Perspective: A special report to members of the 700 club*, June July 1980. CBN Info. File: Pat’s Perspective, 1977-1982, box 1 of 2. PRC.

<sup>212</sup> Pat Robertson, “Prayer Calendar Partners,” *Flame*, September, 1980. RUA.

<sup>213</sup> Robertson, “Prayer Calendar Partners.”

<sup>214</sup> *There is no true energy Crisis: An Eye-Witness Account Report* by Lindsey Williams. P. 3 private collection.



“outstanding Christian gentleman.” Lindsey and Chance spoke to an oil expert, “Mr. X,” who told them that there was plenty of oil in the ground, but their efforts were prohibited. Free enterprise, Mr. X explained, has always come to the rescue of America in times of need.<sup>215</sup> Williams wrote that he witnessed a monster oil strike but the next day found out the well was capped and the company had to withdraw from the area. “The excuse they gave [the Federal Government] was that some of the micro-organisms of that area of the Arctic Ocean might be destroyed if an oil spill ever happened.”<sup>216</sup> He continued, “For one thing, the bureaucrats were working through the ecologists. Here is one instance: Construction of the Pipeline was halted one spring day when the ecologists stopped everything because a falcon’s nest was in the way, and the birds hadn’t hatched yet. They would have to wait a month, idling hundreds of men... which cost... an extra two million dollars!”<sup>217</sup> Overall, the promotional pamphlet praised American business, accused the media and environmentalists of obstructing and vilifying oil companies, and lastly offered the reader information on how to be saved. Williams concluded, “Stand up for God and Country! Pray, work, fight!... Let Freedom and hope continue in at least one nation on earth!”<sup>218</sup>

This book and promotional pamphlet circulated throughout the conservative Protestant community. Multiple copies, for instance, found their way into the home of a

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 29.

devout conservative Protestant in Western Massachusetts named here as “Ferne.”<sup>219</sup> Ferne is a pseudonym given here to a woman who donated her Christian reading collection to a fundamentalist Baptist church. As simply one example, she represents the common congregant who was interested in growing as a Christian and enjoyed reading authors who offered explanations of current events while predicting the future through a Christian perspective. Her collection of Christian reading material consisted of alarmist publications such as *Big Sister is Watching You* (1993) by Texe Marrs as well as more theologically based and moderate devotionals like *A Life of Integrity: Right Choices* (1991) by Irine B. Alyn et al. Her reading material and page notes do not suggest she was an outward anti-environmentalist, but she also did not have a problem reading or possibly disseminating pamphlets promoting a new book that promised an inside look at how ecologists were harming the United States. The fact that Lindsey Williams was a Baptist chaplain was undoubtedly the stamp of approval for Ferne to trust what he wrote, or at least the reason why multiple promotional copies found their way into her home. At the same time, she was exposed to conflicting messages regarding the health of nature’s resources from other conservative Protestant leaders.

Besides William’s promotional pamphlet, Ferne had the 1982 book *Occupy Till I Come: How to Spiritually Survive the Last Days* by Californian Pastor Greg Laurie. The point of the book was to warn the reader that Jesus would soon return and his proof was

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<sup>219</sup> “Ferne” is a pseudonym given to a woman who donated a collection of her reading material to a fundamentalist Baptist church in western Massachusetts. This church is also where the author collected a variety of educational material left over from the church’s Christian school that operated during the 1970s and 1980s. Ferne’s collection consisted of two boxes of loose books dating primarily from 1978 to the early 1990s.

that the world's situation was progressively getting worse. Laurie used the ecological crisis as evidence: "The military leaders are telling us that things are coming to an end. The ecologists are telling us that we are destroying our natural resources. The lawmakers are telling us that crime is at epidemic proportions, with no end in sight."<sup>220</sup> Later Laurie validated Carter's Global 2000 Report by using it to legitimize his argument, writing that by the year 2000 the world will be more crowded, polluted, less stable ecologically and more vulnerable to disruption.<sup>221</sup> Unlike Williams, Laurie authenticated the ecological crisis to depict a deteriorating world and fewer resources. Insinuating that great wealth was not godly, Laurie also warned that America was like Sodom and Gomorra because, like them, the U.S. had an overabundance of food.<sup>222</sup>

The reality of the ecological and/or energy crisis was one issue among many that those in the conservative Protestant community like Ferne talked and read about. It was not a major concern, but with the rising global awareness of environmental issues, it was becoming an area that warranted recognition at least by transforming in shape to legitimize larger claims. Stands were taken on the subject but they changed so much that even Jerry Falwell, who held strong opinions on just about every other issue, confronted the ecological crisis gingerly. In 1976 he used pollution and the energy shortage to support an argument similar to Laurie's that the earth was deteriorating

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<sup>220</sup> Greg Laurie, *Occupy Till I Come: How to Spiritually Survive the Last Days* (Eugene, Ore: Harvest House, 1982), 12. Private collection.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 96

because Christians were not fighting for a moral society.<sup>223</sup> However by 1980, in a sermon in which he promoted his upcoming television special “America You’re Too Young To Die,” he at first seemed uncertain about an energy crisis but then denied he ever believed it existed and echoed Williams: “What about energy resources? Yes we need to improve that situation. I’m not sure we have an energy crisis. I never have been. There’s a shortage of what gets to the people. I don’t think there’s any shortage of what’s in the ground.”<sup>224</sup>

Until about 1980 few conservative Protestants, including Jerry Falwell, questioned the reality of the energy crisis. Lindsey Williams was probably telling the truth that at first he believed what experts were saying about the scarcity of energy. Christians could see the energy bill rising, which prompted churches to action as at Criswell’s in 1977. However, after “secular” conservatives such as Howard Phillips and Paul Weyrich, with the help of Ed McAtteer, contacted and worked alongside religious right pastors like Falwell, the topic of environmental protection and the related energy crisis began to be weighed with greater frequency against the benefits of capitalism. Nevertheless, although questioned, the feelings within the conservative Protestant community towards caring for God’s creation did not change to any great degree throughout the decade. Perhaps the greatest case in point was the religious right’s

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<sup>223</sup> Jerry Falwell, “America Back to God,” 1977 FM 3-4 Box 2, Unit 7: OTGH # 386: 10. LUA.

<sup>224</sup> Jerry Falwell, Untitled Sermon, 1980. Record Group 3: Old-Time Gospel Hour, Sub-Group 4, series 4: OTGH Transcripts 300, Unit 8, OTGH # 390: LUA.

response towards President Reagan appointing born-again Christian and Charismatic James G. Watt to Secretary of the Interior in 1981.

### Watt and the Religious Right

People have a hard time analyzing the career of Secretary of the Interior James G. Watt (1981-1983). During his tenure in the Reagan Administration, scores, if not hundreds, of articles were written about him and his environmental policies. Reporters followed Watt about and some were allowed special access. Such opportunities for the press were most likely granted with the hope that the populace would understand the Secretary of the Interior as a reasonable person with a balanced approach towards America's resources. However, these attempts failed and Watt remained a polarizing figure. As Watt still contends, the Secretary of the Interior is a position that attracts controversy and thus is an appointment frequently short-lived.<sup>225</sup> Keeping in mind the problematic situation that follows this cabinet post, Watt, as many journalists concluded, was indeed a "lightening rod."

One of the first episodes that pushed Watt into the national spotlight was a remark made during his confirmation process with Congress. Senator Paul Laxalt asked Watt about his views towards conservation. Watt said that he did not know how many

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<sup>225</sup> The short tenures of Secretaries of the Interior was pointed out by Watt in an interview with the author conducted on April 21, 2014, as well as in political scientist R. McGregor Cawley's book *Federal Land, Western Anger: The Sagebrush Rebellion and Environmental Politics*, (Lawrence Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1993).

generations would pass before the Lord returned, referring to the premillennialist belief in Christ's Second Coming, but until that time, he continued, humanity must maintain resources for the future. Just about every scholar that examines Watt tells this story but even today some environmental writers like Glenn Scherer only quote the first half, framing Watt as a religious radical.<sup>226</sup> After the hearing, environmental groups such as the Sierra Club publicized the truncated remarks and sent out mass mailings portraying Watt as lacking rationality – a view that fit right into the other alarming portrayals of the religious right at the time. The People for the American Way, for example, produced a video in 1982 starring actor Burt Lancaster asking for donations to fight the religious right, a movement said to be working towards a theocracy.<sup>227</sup> What initially upset the Sierra Club was really Watt's past employment as the head of a new conservative organization called the Rocky Mountain Defense Fund, created by beer magnate Joseph Coors and other secular free enterprise advocates. In this role, it was one of Watt's jobs to fight environmentalists who frequently sued to stall development and keep humans from "ruining" nature. It was his work here that led to his name being brought to Ronald Reagan's attention when deciding upon Cabinet members. It seemed that Reagan found

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<sup>226</sup> Glenn Scherer, "Christian-right views are swaying politicians and threatening the environment," <http://grist.org/article/scherer-christian/> (accessed Jan 24, 2016). After the article was published, Scherer went back and corrected his original point regarding Watt's comments to Congress.

<sup>227</sup> Liberty University Archives, Communications Department, Asset ID: 222746, Tape No: F1-AOP-001.mov, Tape Name PAW Fund Raiser/Norman Lear Pilot, Sermon Title: DUB from ¾. On front screen "People for the American Way, Washington Media." 10-4-82. This video is hosted by Burt Lancaster. He says that we can't let these people mix religion with politics and urges people to stand up against the religious right. To vilify the religious right, they show how school boards are censoring teachers and burning books.

a kindred spirit – someone who understood that nature was a resource to use for humanity’s benefit and more precisely to improve America’s economic situation.

As Susan P. Bratton correctly states in her article “The Ecotheology of James Watt,” Watt’s view towards nature was really not a product of his religious beliefs. He grew up in Wyoming where it was a continual struggle to manipulate the environment to survive, let alone make money. It was here that Watt adopted a strong utilitarian relationship towards the natural world. In his youth, religion did not play an important role in his life. Growing up and during college he attended mainstream churches, but it was not until the 1960s, working in Washington D.C., that he became a born-again Charismatic.<sup>228</sup> The conversion, however, did not change his relationship with the natural world, but rather he molded his interpretation of the Bible to fit his long-held views. While working for the Department of the Interior, he heard and came to embrace the term “stewardship” from Secretary Udall and used it throughout the rest of his career to describe how humans should interact with the natural world.<sup>229</sup>

In short, devout Christian Charismatic or not, Watt understood “stewardship” to mean mankind should use nature wisely, but use it and manipulate it nonetheless for the benefit of people. The only time that Watt expressed views that one might deem close to environmental rhetoric was during Nixon’s Administration in which it was his job to promote the policies of the President. For example, Nixon was quick to respond to the environmental movement marked by the Earth Day observance. Watt, going about the

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<sup>228</sup> Biographical Material 1962-1980 Note in the James Watt Collection, UWA.

<sup>229</sup> Interview with the author (April 21, 2014).

Administration's business, was the guest speaker at an environmental dinner at John Carroll University on March 24, 1970. Watt declared, "We can no longer afford to be exploiters of nature. We must become the trustee of our environment. Environmental considerations must become the central components of every decision we make because we are now aware that decisions we make will shape the future of mankind."<sup>230</sup>

As Reagan's Secretary of the Interior, Watt tried to win the public's favor for his understanding of environmental stewardship. Although he had supporters, the environmental movement relentlessly attacked him and compared his appointment to a farmer who chose the fox to watch the hen house. While the controversy continued, his religious allies such as Falwell and the Moral Majority never came to his aid nor did they publically endorse the Administration's environmental policies. This divergence continued in spite of Falwell practically worshipping Reagan.<sup>231</sup>

Beyond the seemingly unexplainable silence of the Moral Majority, Watt's relationships with other Christians were odd to say the least. The evangelical and very pro-environmental Mark Hatfield, Senator from Oregon, was on friendly terms with

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<sup>230</sup> James Watt, speech at John Carol University titled, "The Challenge of the Lake Erie Basin," March 24, 1970. James Watt Collection, Box 2, Folder 3, Acc. #7667, James G. Watt Papers, UWA.

6327 a speech Watt delivered at an environmental dinner at John Carroll University on March 24, 1970. UWA.

<sup>231</sup> When Falwell died in 2007, the same catafalque that was used for Reagan was rushed to Lynchburg, Virginia for Falwell. In Falwell's newsletter, *Falwell Confidential*, he wrote a piece on August 16, 2002, "Ronald Reagan, My Political Hero." During the 1980s, Falwell remained a supporter of Reagan even though other conservatives like Weyrich were upset that the President was not conservative enough.



Watt and the two had lunch with Pat Robertson on at least one occasion in the 1970s.<sup>232</sup> Watt appeared a few times on Robertson's 700 Club in the early 1980s but, as Watt recalls, they talked about faith while the environment was not broached - or if it was, they did not delve into the nuts and bolts of the issue or controversy. Moreover, when Watt invited Francis Schaeffer to speak in Washington D.C. in 1982, he was asked to talk about humanism and national defense. Schaeffer, the man who wrote *Pollution and the Death of Man* and delivered a string of lectures pushing Christian environmental stewardship in the late 1960s, did not once talk about nature or stewardship in this speech for the beleaguered Secretary of the Interior. The only clue available connecting the two and Christian environmental stewardship comes from a letter Watt wrote to a supporter who had sent him a book. Watt responded that his wife had recently attended several meetings with Schaeffer and "Unbeknownst to us, for the last several months, Dr. Shaeffer has followed our work in the Department and was very supportive of the change we are bringing in our commitment to stewardship."<sup>233</sup> Maybe Schaeffer had changed his views towards nature in the past ten years, but that is difficult to fathom. *Pollution and the Death of Man* promoted a much more devoted compassionate relationship between humanity and the environment than that held by Watt. Since 1970

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<sup>232</sup> Mark Hatfield was a devout evangelical but one who leaned much more towards those in the community considered more moderate. Hatfield wrote very pro-environmental articles for Christian publications and should be identified with those who later embraced the Evangelical Environmental Network or Ron Sider.

<sup>233</sup> Letter James Watt to Mr. B. Demar Hooper, Nov. 10, 1981, Box 3, Folder 10, Acc. #7667, James G. Watt Papers. UWA.

however, Schaeffer had largely dropped the issue, but underscored the heightened value of nature as the creation of God in his 1977 documentary *How Should We Then Live?*

Beyond this peculiar meeting of Watt and Schaeffer, fellow Charismatic Pat Robertson neither denounced nor supported Watt. While the Moral Majority was rapturously elated in the early 1980s, claiming they had put Reagan into the White House, they were soon disheartened to find that few Christians were appointed to Cabinet posts. Watt however, was one who indeed made it, but the Moral Majority did not show any organized attempt at letting the larger public know they approved Watt's interpretation of stewardship. Falwell, on his own, could have simply supported Watt in any public forum and he actually did when it came to other topics.<sup>234</sup>

Falwell's lack of assistance for Watt cannot be attributed to the fact that the two followed different religious philosophies. Falwell liked the Secretary of the Interior, but was not sure what public environmental position to take. During a sermon in 1982 Falwell, as he often did, delved into current day politics. He praised Watt as a godly man who was only doing what the President asked of him and was trying to make the U.S. energy-independent so America would not have to "bow down" to Saudi Arabia or

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<sup>234</sup> Falwell spoke out on Watt's behalf when journalists questioned if the Secretary of the Interior meant to be anti-Israel in a letter sent to the Israeli Prime Minister in 1984. Falwell, when asked what he thought on the matter, outwardly defended Watt by saying that he read the letter in question himself and found nothing negative about it. Falwell, an ardent state of Israel advocate, had no problem defending Watt in this situation. The larger fight with the environmental movement proved something Falwell did not jump into. Asset ID: 262190, Tape No: F1-ANS-019.mov, Tape Name: Dr. Jerry Falwell on CNN, Rec Date: 12-03-1984, Tape Series: News CNN. Communications Department, Liberty University.

the Ayatollah in order to run automobiles or heat homes.<sup>235</sup> He joked, “And he’s [Watt] the fella that all the environmentalists are after his jugular vein... God bless the environmentalists, everybody’s gotta do something.”<sup>236</sup> The comment garnered a little laughter and he went on to say America needs people who can take abuse but keep on going. These comments only suggest his personal feelings and lack any theological or historical support for Watt, an uncommon approach for Falwell, who was normally dogmatic and enthusiastically unapologetic in his political views.

Later in April of 1983 Watt was featured in Falwell’s *Moral Majority Report*, the organization’s newspaper. Watt described nature as providing the necessary resources needed to survive as a nation in the face of the cold war. He was quoted as saying, “We must rearm America if we are going to live in peace. To rearm America, you’ve got to have energy. On the lands owned by the federal government, which are a third of America, we have enough energy to meet our needs for thousands of years...”<sup>237</sup> He went on to say that Native American reservations were the picture of socialism and encouraged them to open their lands for industry which would bring jobs and money to their doorstep. Nevertheless, after this article the pages of the *Moral Majority Report* remained virtually silent with regard to Watt.

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<sup>235</sup> Liberty University, Communication’s Department, Asset ID: 255863, Tape No: F1-POT-0515.mov, Tape Name: Talking Right & Living Right – Proverbs 15:1-33, Tape Series Program- Old Time Gospel Hour, Recorded Date: 07-25-1982, 43:17:24. Communications Department, Liberty University.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Harry M. Covert Jr., “Reagan’s Dynamic Interior Secretary Watt: U.S. Resources Plentiful,” *Moral Majority Report* 5 (April 1983): 5

Shortly after the article ran, Watt visited Liberty College to give a commencement speech on May 9, 1983. In promoting the event, Falwell placed Watt at the end of an impressive list coming to Lynchburg. At the Wednesday service, astronaut Jack Lousma talked about how God is everywhere in space; the following Wednesday the podium featured Vice President George H. W. Bush. Falwell said he liked Watt because he was “controversial.” Furthermore, Falwell redirected any blame to the President, saying that Watt was just doing what Reagan wanted him to do and “he’s doing it quite well if you ask my opinion.”<sup>238</sup> During the speech at Liberty, Watt totally circumvented the issue of Christian environmental stewardship and instead warned against large government that could stamp out religious freedom. He accused public schools of pushing secular philosophies on students. Watt urged Liberty College graduates to take action and stop the courts and legislatures that seek to destroy life for the unborn, born, old or crippled. America, Watt said, is a chosen place and he asked his audience to revolutionize the world for God.<sup>239</sup>

In 1982 Watt reflected upon the dearth of support from members of his religious community but did not blame them. He wrote that they backed him by first supporting Reagan and thus he did not feel the need to directly ask for their assistance. After further thought, he reasoned that asking for help would look like he was using his faith

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<sup>238</sup> Asset ID: 222719 Tape No: F1-AMV-PT002.mo, Tape Name: Sandi Patti Concert Reel 2 of 2, Rec Date 04-03-1983. Department of Communication, Liberty University.

<sup>239</sup> Asset ID: 223671, Tape No: F1-LHF-026.mov, Tape Name: LBC Graduation 1983-James Watt Line (Reel 2 of 2), Rec Date: 05-09-1983, Tape Series: LU Historical Footage. Department of Communication Liberty University.

as a political tool.<sup>240</sup> He concluded, “The evangelical or fundamental Christian community with which I identify has traditionally not taken positions on political positions for which I am responsible in the Government.”<sup>241</sup> He thought it was inappropriate for the organized church to have a stance on every issue.<sup>242</sup> Watt’s conclusions, however, seem at odds with the fact that the religious right, or at least its top leaders, did not have any problem taking sides on other largely secular political topics such as the handover of the Panama Canal or the proliferation of nuclear arms. In short, Watt did not feel comfortable asking for aid and made the best out of the situation.

#### Christian Schools, Free Enterprise and God’s Earth

Although Falwell stayed aloof from taking a stance on environmental stewardship, the Christian schools he passionately favored read books throughout the 1980s that largely embraced it. The top two publishers, A Beka Books and Bob Jones University Press, expressed such viewpoints while simultaneously following the larger religious right’s growing love affair with free enterprise and small government. A Beka science books pointed out that humanity should “master” nature but added the caveat that it must be used wisely. Their other books however, as well as the material produced by Bob Jones University, maintained a compassionate view for nature protection.

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<sup>240</sup> Untitled draft by James Watt in folder “Secretary of the Interior – Christian Religious Stand of Watt 1982” dated: 10/6/1982, 7153. UWA.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

The Bob Jones 1980 edition of *Biology for Christian Schools*, by William S. Pinkston, featured a section dedicated to ecology. Pinkston was a biology teacher who had taught at Bob Jones Academy since 1969. His basic premise was that humanity is a part of nature and therefore has a right to use it, but must do so without waste. Humans, he wrote, can take the “consumer-manager role too far” and destroy the environment. He went as far as legitimizing the worries of secular environmentalists without embracing calls for preservation: “It is inconceivable that God would place man on an earth that did not have natural resources to supply his needs. However, some sources give us the idea that no matter what man does, he messes up this world so badly that soon everyone will be starving, wearing gas masks, and drinking water out of cans.” In this latter statement Pinkston was not minimizing or dismissing warnings from environmentalists. Instead, desperate times might come to fruition due to poor management: “These sorts of things may happen; if they do, it will be because man has misused his environment, not because he has used it....”<sup>243</sup>

In 1981, A Beka released *The Modern Age: The History of the World in Christian Perspective Vol. II*. Along with the idea of Christian nationalism, such as the Pilgrims founding America for religious purposes, free enterprise was credited with

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<sup>243</sup> William S. Pinkston, Jr., *Biology for Christian Schools*, (Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University, 1980): 552. Pinkston concluded, “Although a Christian should not be an “ecology nut,” screaming for the protection of the environment to the exclusion of its wise use, a Christian must not personally practice nor permit governments to practice unwise environmental management. This is being a “good steward.... After all, not only money and abilities are given to us by the Lord, but also the physical world is in our charge. Using it and the biological community wisely is part of our responsibility.” p.557

making the nation “great” through the industrial revolution. The authors wrote that with the use of technology and hard work, “Men drained swamps and reclaimed land in other ways to make more land available for tilling.” Other benefits were increased population and life expectancy. The book also promoted the American Republican Party, which was unabashedly the friend of big business, and followed a remark from President Calvin Coolidge, “The business of America is business,” with “Americans realized that prosperity of business meant prosperity for all.”<sup>244</sup> In the sections on the twentieth century, the authors labeled FDR’s New Deal a “counterproductive deal” because it made people reliant on the government and destroyed incentive. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the environmental movement was not categorized along with socialism or big government when exploring events of the twentieth century.

The history books by Bob Jones University praised free enterprise just as diligently, but also took a stand on environmental protection. In 1982 they produced *United States History for Christian Schools*. While explaining numerous episodes in America’s past, the authors frequently inserted the subject of free enterprise and in some cases placed it on the same level as religious liberty. Only by Plymouth Governor William Bradford’s abandoning a system of communal living and supporting private property, one textbook argued, was the colony saved. Colonists came to America, the

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<sup>244</sup> Jerry Combee, Laurel Hicks and Mike Lowman, *The Modern Age: The History of the World in Christian Perspective Vol. II*, (Pensacola, Florida: A Beka Book Publication, 1981), 507.

authors explained, not just for religious but also economic opportunity.<sup>245</sup> The authors even described the Great Depression with a note of optimism: “The depression did not make everyone poor; it made some poorer and others wealthier.” Included was a heading titled “Blessings of the Depression”, which explained that hardship spurred many citizens to embrace the value of hard work and religious faith.<sup>246</sup>

While advocating strongly for free enterprise, the section on the “ecology movement,” unlike that on FDR’s New Deal, evaded bias. Instead it was presented in a straightforward manner by stating that the Nixon Administration sought to stop pollution by increasing federal regulation of industries. In another neutral statement, the authors noted that rallies and demonstrations pushed for restrictions to control pollution through the implementation of laws.<sup>247</sup> In the conclusion the authors described the present day (1982) as a time when society was disintegrating and the only way to improve the situation was by people turning to God. Notably, one of the social problems the authors pointed to was the failure of businesses to take greater responsibility for their effects on the environment.<sup>248</sup> They continued that if mankind is not right with God then “problems like pollution, racism, and moral corruption will never be solved.”<sup>249</sup>

Even in 1984, after conservative Protestants had time to read the likes of Lindsey Williams and observe the situation with James Watt on the national stage, the messages

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<sup>245</sup> Glen Chamber and Gene Fisher, *United States History for Christian Schools*, (Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press, 1982): 40, 50, 50+.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 486-487.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 585.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 608.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*



produced, especially by Bob Jones University, changed little. In Pinkston's *Life Science for Christian Schools* (1984), he maintained a Christian environmental stewardship outlook, encouraging protection of endangered species and warning that not all energy is renewable. He stressed that unwise use of energy can deplete water tables and pointed out the problems associated with strip mining coal and using non-biodegradable pollutants. "Every year," he wrote, "America alone puts over seventy billion tons of pollution into the air." But he also pointed out the economic cost, writing that because pollution laws are sometimes so expensive, they force some companies to close. As stewards, he wrote, humans must look at the facts and act responsibly, thus encouraging the reader not to assume the extremes of dismissing nature for profits or always embracing preservationist views: "For this reason, our responsibility as stewards may also include electing lawmakers who will act responsibly on matters of ecology – even when the right action is not the popular one."<sup>250</sup>

By 1989 A Beka Books had published a textbook on economics promoting capitalism while also taking a bold stance towards resource conservation. The book introduced a section titled "Pollution, Waste, and Ugliness." In it Adam Smith was credited with supporting the freedom of the marketplace while he likely had no idea of the toll commerce would have. Smith's town of Kirkcaldy, the text explained, thanks to industry has now become "ugly and cheerless."<sup>251</sup> The blame on capitalism however,

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<sup>250</sup> William S. Pinkston Jr., *Life Science for Christian Schools*, (Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press 1984), 375.

<sup>251</sup> Russell Kirk, *Economics Work and Prosperity*, (Pensacola, Florida: A Beka Book Publication, 1989), 304.

was balanced out by the author's observation that landscapes can suffer just as much in nations like the Soviet Union.

Although the author praised American ingenuity and proposed a need to move away from scarcity, concern for the environment held a dominant place throughout the book.

“The short-run costs of pollution prevention, conservation, and urban restoration are high. Yet the long-run costs to humanity of neglecting those economic responsibilities would be far higher. Steps already are being taken, especially in the United States, to preserve mankind's natural and cultural inheritance. An economy that fails to provide for future generations is like a farmer who consumes his own seed-corn intended for next year's planting. Such economic problems must be faced boldly in the future.”<sup>252</sup>

This viewpoint was championed, while contemporary work safety measures and regulations were presented as ridiculous obstacles to a healthier economy. The book communicated a story about a business called the Gray Iron Fabricating Company of Mortmain, Michigan. The business went smoothly until the 1960s, when the unions demanded more money. Later the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) forced the company to pay a fine for not having the “best equipment.” Subsequently, management got in trouble for promoting a man instead of a woman and then was sued by an injured employee who ignored safety regulations. By 1980 the

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., 308.

company showed a loss. The author concluded by asking the students what they thought the business should do next.<sup>253</sup>

The entire story was based on the company being portrayed as the victim of 1960s progressive philosophies. Although OSHA came about in 1970, the same year as the birth of the modern environmental movement, the author validated environmental protection earlier in the text and left it out of the story in which the EPA could have easily been cast with the rest of the villains who tried to ruin American hard work, ingenuity and economic freedom.

In sum, although free enterprise rose in importance among conservative Protestants in the 1980s, it did not crush compassionate ideas of Christian environmental stewardship in either A Beka or Bob Jones University Christian school material that was disseminated throughout the U.S. A different position from that of the 1970s, however, was taken toward honoring the poor over the rich. The story of “Pioneers,” which explained what makes a real American, toned down its message that it was the struggle with nature on the frontier that created American identity. A Beka Books also changed Andrew Carnegie’s understanding of the rich. In the 1970s they quoted him as pitying the children of the wealthy. In the 1980s the authors of an A Beka history book moved beyond nostalgically glamorizing the life of the poor by writing that Carnegie once said: “The ‘good old times’ were not good old times. Neither master nor servant was as well situated then as today. A relapse to old conditions would be disastrous to both - not the

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid., 357-358.

least so to him who serves - and would sweep away civilization with it.”<sup>254</sup> But again, even with the heightened pro-capitalistic views, the compassionate Christian environmental stewardship message remained throughout the educational publications and anti-environmental viewpoints were virtually nonexistent.

In 1983 a conservative Protestant author named Constance E. Cumbey wrote a book titled *Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow: The New Age Movement and Our Coming Age of Barbarism*. In summary, Cumbey strove to uncover a massive conspiracy by a religion/worldview labeled the New Age Movement that rejected Judeo-Christianity and wanted to establish a “New World Order” in which people worshipped the goodness of humanity and mother earth. She linked various historical villains such as Hitler and Jim Jones to this movement, which she warned was gaining believers through groups like the environmental movement. She warned that the New Agers wanted a “cleansing action” to rid the world of such evils as Jews, Christians and orthodox Muslims.<sup>255</sup> This book went on to be an evangelical best seller, but the vehemently anti-environmental message stayed primarily within the background of the intended audience of conservative Protestants. Her message of a New World Order conspiracy theory was not referred to in the 1980s by religious right leaders Robertson, Falwell or any others. The Christian

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<sup>254</sup> Michael R. Lowman with Laurel Hicks, George T. Thompson, *United States History in Christian Perspective Heritage Of Freedom*, (Pensacola, Florida: A Beka Book Publication, 1982, 1983): 361. This quote was taken from Andrew Carnegie’s essay *The Gospel of Wealth* first published in 1889. Both Carnegie quotations used by A Beka Books were authentic, the publishers just picked which ones they wanted to use or ignore to support their message at the time.

<sup>255</sup> Constance E. Cumbey, *Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow: The New Age Movement and Our Coming Age of Barbarism* (Shreveport, LA: Huntington House, 1983), 120.

school material produced by A Beka Books and Bob Jones University also ignored Cumbey.

Perhaps the closest “official” anti-environmental message that originated from the conservative Protestant community in the 1980s came from a group of religious leaders who formed the Coalition for Revival (COR) in 1984. Over the years they produced resolutions they all could agree on such as “A Manifesto for the Christian Church Declaration and Covenant, July 4, 1986; An Act of Contrition and Humble Repentance; A Solemn Covenant; and A Statement of Essential Truth and A Call to Action.”<sup>256</sup> Members of this group included Tim LaHaye, Frankie Schaeffer, Adrian Rogers, Connaught Marshner, Ed McAteer and Harold Lindsell. COR produced another resolution in 1986 titled “The Christian World View of Economics.” It was written by the members of the group’s Economics Committee, and edited by E. Calvin Beisner and Daryl S. Borgquist. After stating that ordinarily a cause for economic hardship was spiritual poverty, they denied that overpopulation was a cause for future economic problems. Furthermore, under statement 21 they wrote that “stewardship” means individual ownership and is accountable to God: “Use of property should not be left to the decision of the state.” Article 27 read, “We deny that the amount of material wealth on Earth will ever prove insufficient, under God’s sovereign hand, for the needs of the population God permits, so long as people live consistently with God’s laws.”<sup>257</sup> The

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<sup>256</sup> [http://www.reformation.net/Pages/COR\\_About\\_History.htm](http://www.reformation.net/Pages/COR_About_History.htm) (accessed 9/11/14).

<sup>257</sup> *The Christian World View of Economics* edited by E. Calvin Beisner MA Chairman and Daryl S. Borgquist with contributions by members of the Economics Committee of

COR's economic committee denied the long-held worries by the environmental movement concerning overpopulation and the depletion of earth's resources. Regarding the latter however, they added the understanding that humanity would not meet this problem as long as it followed God's laws. What God's laws were was not defined. Perhaps it referred to Christian environmental stewardship. Nevertheless, like Cumbey's book, this resolution on economics merged into the background and only took an indirect shot at the environmental movement. It clearly did not make its way into the mainstream concerns of the religious right. Pat Robertson in particular proves this point, as he continued in his support of Christian environmental stewardship on the national stage when he ran for the Presidency in 1988.

#### Robertson's Run for the White House

In 1976 conservative Protestants who prayed for a spiritual and moral rebirth in America were encouraged by Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter, a professed "born-again" evangelical. During Carter's years in office, however, they became disappointed when he did not support their hopes of returning prayer in public school and then invited representatives from the homosexual community to participate in the White House Conference on Families. Reagan, on the other hand, told them exactly what they wanted to hear by utilizing their understanding of Christian American nationalism, for example

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The Coalition on Revival. 1986, 7531. Box 15, Folder 22, Acc. # 10138, Paul M. Weyrich Collection. UWA.

claiming that America is a “shining city upon a hill.”<sup>258</sup> Nevertheless, like Carter, Reagan put their concerns on the back burner and focused instead on the economy. He even appointed pro-choice-leaning Sandra Day O’Conner to the Supreme Court, but unlike Carter he was able to retain the religious community’s support to a great degree. By 1988 Robertson decided he would have to get the job done himself and reported that God had told him to run for the Presidency.

Although Robertson had traditionally encouraged Christian environmental stewardship, during his campaign he went about choosing his position on the issue cautiously. The environment as a political topic was really an unknown for Robertson. Reagan and Watt had made environmentalism a partisan matter and Robertson was running under the Republican banner. At the same time, he probably knew that during the 1980s, environmental groups such as the Sierra Club enjoyed a massive membership increase. Instead of making a swift decision or ignoring it altogether, Robertson had his staff put together an information folder on the topic made up from a wide variety of sources.

Some of the material Robertson’s staffers collected included publications from the Sierra Club’s conservation campaign of 1987-1988. The issues they pushed were a reauthorization of the Clean Air Act; increased protection for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and wilderness/desert national parks in western states; keeping a close

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<sup>258</sup> Reagan used this symbolism in his 1984 GOP nomination speech.

eye on the U.S. Forest service; and working to control toxic and nuclear waste.<sup>259</sup> Robertson's staffers accompanied this information with a much larger booklet from the Alaska Coalition titled *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: Treasure of the North*. Like the Sierra Club's promotional publications, this source argued for the preservation of wilderness in Alaska by demanding a stop to development. It generally presented the reader with timeworn arguments illustrating that a battle continues between greedy energy developers and the need to save what little wilderness is left.

To balance out the preservationists, Robertson's campaign also compiled information from the business community and right-wing advocate groups. One anonymous "Acid Rain Background Memorandum" reasoned that the environmental movement only produced arguments based on emotions and concluded that strengthening regulations would result in American corporations losing billions of dollars. Moreover, the author stated, the Clean Air Act of 1970 had already proved effective and cut down on pollution caused by the burning of coal.<sup>260</sup> Similar arguments came from Kent Jefferys of the Republican Study Committee, who complained that preservationists wanted to unreasonably lock up resources in Alaska while ignoring the local Inuits who hoped to benefit from energy exploration. In addition to these examples, Robertson received a personal letter in 1988 from the President of the National Coal Association, Richard L. Lawson, asking him to think about the health of

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<sup>259</sup> Sierra Club Conservation Campaign 1987-1988, National Conservation Campaigns, folder: AFR Environment, box: 2 # 2. Pat Robertson Collection, RUA.

<sup>260</sup> "Acid Rain Background Memorandum." Folder: AFR, box 2# 2 Environment. Pat Robertson Collection, RUA.



American companies in the global market. In a similar tactic to that of the wilderness groups, Lawson depicted his interests and American businesses in general as barely surviving under the great strain of regulations. An increase in these policies, he warned, would cost companies and the American consumer over \$100 billion. The consequence, Lawson warned, would be economic decline. The letter concluded with signatures from a host of other business associations, which compounded the power and weight of Lawson's argument. Some of the other signatories included the American Mining Congress, The Edison Electric Institute, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the American Iron and Steel Institute.<sup>261</sup>

In addition, reading material from Paul Weyrich's right-wing think tank, the Heritage Foundation, found its way into the Americans for Robertson campaign. Weyrich had founded the organization in 1974 and moved on to head the Committee for a Free Congress by the later 1970s. Edited by Doug Bandow, the booklet was one of a series titled *Critical Issues* and discussed "Protecting the Environment: A Free Market Strategy,". Most of the contributing authors hailed from a variety of right-wing groups including the Rand Corporation, the Cato Institute, and the Political Economy Research Center. The gist of their arguments centered on the need for independence on the part of businesses, which would take upon themselves the responsibility to ensure a healthy

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<sup>261</sup> Lawson, attachment, 2. Signers of the document included: Alexander B. Trowbridge, President National Association of Manufacturers; Thomas R. Kuh, Exec. Vice Pres. Edison Electric Institute; John A. Knebel, President American Mining Congress; John A. Anderson, Exec. Director Electricity Consumers Resource Council; Richard L. Lawson, President National Coal Association; R. Milton Deaner, President American Iron and Steel Institute; Joseph Farrell, President American Waterways Operators; William B. Marx, President Council of Industrial Boiler Owners.

environment. Along with this material, Robertson's campaign gathered a number of general news articles reporting on topics such as nuclear energy facilities and global warming.

In addition to the collected information, a determining role in helping Robertson make a decision regarding the environment was played by his New Hampshire Director of Communication, James L. Hofford. Hofford became an ordained Methodist minister in 1960, but in 1983 he joined the English Plymouth Brethren, a conservative evangelical movement.<sup>262</sup> As a dedicated member of "Americans for Robertson," Hofford conducted research on a possible environmental position. He sent Robertson's campaign manager Connie Snapp a proposed speech, recommendations for policies, and a press release. In December of 1987 he sent a draft of the press release to Snapp urging "immediate release" and suggested Robertson make a solid pro-environmental stand and create an organization called the Environmental Defense Initiative (EDI) to help carry out such work when Robertson became president. He wrote, "I'm convinced that the Environmental Defense Initiative is Urgent! My prayer is that Pat will build and harness the sense of urgency we need in this nation." The short report described a future speech Robertson might deliver in New Hampshire. After stating that Robertson ensured America's nuclear defense, it read, "the pollution of our precious water supplies are 'self-inflicted wounds' in which we all share guilt by using toxic pollutants" and added that "overused landfills are leeching into our country's aquifers [water bearing rock

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<sup>262</sup> James Hofford, e-mail to author, 30 June 2014.

strata] and such pollution lasts for centuries.”<sup>263</sup> Furthermore, Hofford wrote that Robertson would restrict any disposal of nuclear waste in the northeast because of the dense population and delicate watershed areas.<sup>264</sup> Nuclear power plants would only be allowed to operate if they adhered to all strict regulations, but Hofford added that the campaign was reasonable and knew that no measure could ever totally guarantee the public’s safety and the power company would not be expected to promise or be forced to attain such requirements.<sup>265</sup>

Hofford additionally sent a proposed speech on the environment to Robertson. The introduction was edited out for being overly dramatic because it equated an alien invasion with the ecological crisis. However, what remained was a call for action to address a list of serious environmental problems, including the diminishing ozone layer, a cause of skin cancer; acid rain, the cause of the decline of the maple syrup business in New Hampshire; global deforestation; and overflowing landfills. Hofford insisted that the economy could not be revived until “we restore our environment that supports life itself.”<sup>266</sup> He suggested a variety of solutions, the first being recycling and environmentally safe incinerators. The energy derived from the latter process, Hofford wrote, could light every American home.<sup>267</sup> In conclusion the EDI would spearhead regional and local initiatives to save our habitats. Hofford wanted to say that

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<sup>263</sup> Jim Hofford, “Press Release,” 6 Jan 1988., 1. Folder: AFR, environment, box 2 # 2 Environment. Pat Robertson Collection. RUA.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>266</sup> Jim Hofford, “An Environmental Statement for Pat Robertson,” 1988., 3. Folder: AFR, environment, box 2 # 2 Environment. Pat Robertson Collection. RUA.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 4.

environmental protection was as important as an imminent nuclear attack but this was reworded by an editor to read, “Just as the development of a strategic defense initiative is necessary to protect us from nuclear attack, so an ‘Environmental Defense Initiative’ is also needed to protect our natural habitat.”<sup>268</sup>

The campaign’s response to Hofford’s pro-environmental position was initially favorable.<sup>269</sup> Indeed, the proposed speech was edited and prepared but then doubt soon set in. The combined pressure from the prevalent GOP position towards the environmental movement, the fact that the issue was not a top priority for either party, and advice from conservative free enterprise advocates dampened Robertson’s enthusiasm for adding this new plank to the campaign. Robertson was not writing freely for his followers anymore. Now he was in the political world where allies in business were essential and he needed to pander to a wide voting demographic.

Although Hofford never realized his hope of seeing the EDI become central to the campaign, Robertson was nevertheless open to the proposal. Moreover, Hofford’s example alone shows that among Robertson’s religious community a strict utilitarian and/or uncaring view towards the environment was not the accepted norm; that is, Hofford thought his pro-environmental platform stood a chance with the campaign supporters. Ultimately however, Robertson listened to the anti-environmental rhetoric of the GOP while not adopting their position. At the same time he also passed up the opportunity to embrace an eco-friendly platform. This choice was a political move, not

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>269</sup> James Hofford, e-mail to author, 30 June 2014.

a reflection of a long-held understanding that the religious right traditionally opposed environmental protection. The political alliance with the GOP proved in later years to make further inroads into the conservative Protestant world when it came to the environment. Nevertheless, after bowing out of the race, Robertson felt free to once again articulate his views towards nature and he did so at the 1988 Republican National Convention in New Orleans. In tune with Hoffer's beliefs, Robertson was unafraid to tell the world that he hoped for a future that respected the earth. In his speech, Robertson set his environmental statement within the landscape of Christian American nationalism by referring to America as a "city set on a hill" where he hoped one day, "the water is pure to drink, the air clean to breathe, and the citizens respect and care for the soil, the forests, and God's other creatures who share with us the earth, the sky, and the water."<sup>270</sup> No caveats followed promoting human domination over nature or the higher importance of American economics.

## Conclusion

Jerry Falwell tried numerous strategies to promote and protect American conservative Protestant culture. He created the Moral Majority, added greatly to their national identity, started various newsletters and a magazine, founded a college and raised millions of dollars to air prime-time specials. During the late 1980s he launched a cable television station called the Liberty Channel. It was (and remains today) designed

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<sup>270</sup> Pat Robertson, *The Plan* (Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers, 1989), 198.

to provide Christian-based family programming. Christians could now enjoy safe entertainment. They could view choir singing, stay up-to-date with news, and even watch a variety of secular films such as *The Little Princess* starring Shirley Temple on a lazy Saturday afternoon. The channel also produced original shows, one of which was *The Over the Hill Gang* hosted by Thomas Road Baptist Church soloist Doug Oldham. The target audience was seniors who desired to be energetic and out and about – like Oldham, who on the show rode his motorcycle and interviewed others in his age group who were active in the community.

In 1988 *The Over The Hill Gang* dedicated an episode to the theme of “loneliness.” In one scene Oldham discussed how the world changes over time, trying to highlight the possibility that seniors might feel out of place in the present because things are not what they used to be. In his monologue, Oldham brought up environmental concerns.

“Today the weather seems to’ve had everybody fooled. You read about holes in the ozone layer and greenhouse effect and acid rain and you’re wondering what’s happening to the world we live in. They even say that the polar ice caps are melting and the planet is warming up. Could it be that we’re being told that we could do something about the weather after all? I don’t know.”<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Asset ID: 262525, Tape number F1POH-111.mov, Record date: no date. Copyright: 1988, Tape name: Loneliness, Tape Series Over the Hill Gang, Liberty Broadcasting Network. Communications Department, Liberty University.

Indeed the Christian community thought about these issues and many had opinions, but as Oldham's statement strongly indicates, the religious right, led primarily at this time by Falwell, had not taken a firm public position. If one had existed, there is no possibility that Oldham would have wondered about the environment and humanity's role in its deterioration on a show on Falwell's cable network.

As an individual, Falwell realized an ecological crisis existed but felt the environmental movement was a little silly. In 1982 he expressed sympathy towards the need to protect baby harbor seals from slaughter but pointed out that one and a half million unborn babies a year were being killed in abortion clinics. Thomas Road Baptist Church member and news commentator Cal Thomas expressed similar sentiments on the Moral Majority radio show *Listen America* in which he highlighted the irony in more caustic terms. Thomas additionally accused the media of depicting oil companies as evil and liberal politicians as the defenders of the environment.<sup>272</sup> These views were directly in line with what former *Christianity Today* editor Harold Lindsell was thinking about in the early 1980s as he read *America's Future*, which encouraged him to write his book *Free Enterprise*.

From roughly 1977 to 1989 the relationship between conservative Protestants and concern for environmental protection was changing and the examples of people such as Thomas and Lindsell as well as Lindsay Williams and Constance Cumbey reflect the fact that those who were interested in injecting their faith into political affairs were

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<sup>272</sup> Various examples can be found at: Mor 2-1 Series 2, Folder 2 A, Listen America: Radio: 1984, Jan – June. LUA.

putting the environment in the liberal camp along with traditional enemies such as the ERA. These figures however, were not major leaders of the New Christian Right nor were they preaching from the pulpit.<sup>273</sup> They represented conservative Protestants at the grassroots level who were interested in politics, were caught up in political mobilization such as the Moral Majority, and on their own (with the help of secular conservatives) pinpointed the environmental movement as a threat to the growing importance of free enterprise, which had become a major component in religious right ideology.

The anti-environmental arguments perhaps persuaded a few fellow conservative Protestants to embrace similar feelings. However, there is no evidence our faithful church member Ferne decided that the need to care for the environment was ridiculous after reading Lindsey Williams promotional pamphlet, *The Non-Energy Crisis*. In 1993, she filled in the answers to a devotional “Christian Stewardship of the Environment” by John E. Silvius. Silvius, who presented a basic Christian environmental stewardship argument, encouraged the reader to have compassion for nature because it is God’s creation. He asked his reader, “Does the Scripture support ‘animal rights?’” Ferne wrote, “No – man rules.” but added, “Man has the authority to rule over the creatures but he must not abuse that rule. He is to provide for animals, take care of them.”<sup>274</sup> Although this answer is not hard evidence that she rejected the position of people like Williams, it strongly suggests her mind was not closed to the need for compassionate environmental

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<sup>273</sup> Harold Lindsey retired as editor of *Christianity Today* in 1978.

<sup>274</sup> John E. Silvius, chapter 5, “Christian Stewardship of the Environment in Irene B. Alyn et al. *A Life of Integrity: Right Choices*, (Regular Baptist Press, 1991), 43, private collection.



stewardship. What is more important is the fact that she *read* the devotional. Like the controversy moving about the Southern Baptist Convention, conservative Protestants can quickly tell the difference between a moderate or conservative within their community. Ferne did not dismiss Silvius' chapter and took it seriously enough to fill out the answers. She did not make any comment along the lines that caring for God's creation is secondary to the more important issue of free enterprise, a view Harold Lindsell had adopted by 1982.

The example of Ferne likely represents the mainstream conservative Protestant community's relationship towards the environment during the 1980s. They were exposed to anti-environmental ideas from places other than their leadership but did not jump on the bandwagon en masse. The topic was widely discussed and opinions varied. Some groups in the SBC made resolutions on the topic that represent "action," but mostly they wondered what to do about it. This response however, cannot be connected to anti-environmental positions. The religious right was just as inactive when it came to backing Watt's tenure as Secretary of the Interior. While Watt was steeped in controversy, fellow Charismatic Pat Robertson promoted a more compassionate understanding of nature throughout the 1980s. Additionally, the two major fundamentalist education publishers A Beka Books and Bob Jones University were happily promoting a strong sense of free enterprise while effectively keeping ideas about protecting God's creation from being categorized as an issue held dear by those trying to wreck America. Pat Robertson, James Hofford, A Beka Books and Bob Jones Press maintained eco-friendly views from the late 1970s to 1989, but such perspectives were

becoming more difficult to articulate because of the increasing importance of capitalism within the religious right.

After wondering if humans are destroying the environment, including the ozone layer, Doug Oldham had to sit down because his “trick knee” was acting up, a warning sign that a storm was soon to arrive. This would be one of the last times someone in Falwell’s camp could express curiosity about the impact mankind had on the environment. 1990 proved the end of unchallenged opinions on environmental protection within the mainstream of the New Christian Right and clearer battle lines were to be drawn within the religious community.

## CHAPTER VII

### SHAPING ANTI-ENVIRONMENTALISM IN THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT, 1990 - 2010

Earth Day 1990 marked the beginnings of a growing anti-environmentalism that percolated throughout the religious right world. Past scholars have explained the response as predictably in tune with the community's conservative past. It was easy to conclude that the reenergized environmental movement was weighty enough to demand the militant religious right's attention and ignite an anti-environmental position that was always present but not officially articulated. Indeed, something new was going on, but the shift against protecting nature was actually a response to groups and individuals within the religious community itself who actively lobbied fellow believers to protect the earth in tandem with the secular world. During the 1970s and 1980s eco-friendly sentiments were common among those in the religious right and the views strengthened in agreement with the public's call to heighten environmental action. Subsequently, the religious groups' free-enterprise-leaning leadership felt forced to reckon with the two separate preexisting American Christian nationalistic values of respecting God's earth and the free market.

Sorting out the conflict between the marketplace and the natural world took time and involved a variety of approaches. Free enterprise advocate Jerry Falwell in particular led the religious right's anti-environmentalist charge and proved successful with the aid of other like-minded leaders in his community by using two main strategies. In addition to referencing selected voices from the scientific community, he effectively

delivered a variety of other ad hoc arguments by publically humiliating and denigrating the views of the environmentalist movement, which consequently made outcasts of environmentally friendly congregants. This tactic took roughly seventeen years (1990-2007) to bring about the religious right's present but somewhat tenuous anti-environmental "official" position.

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Pastor Jerry Falwell noticed environmentalism stirring among his own Liberty University students on Earth Day, April 22, 1990, a Sunday. In response to the secular Earth Day observance, the Biology Club at Liberty prepared a hiking trail at the school's picturesque 1950s-style summer camp named Camp Hydeaway, located in the green hills of Lynchburg, Virginia.<sup>275</sup> The club members wanted to promote their accomplishments and asked University President Falwell to make a dedication announcement about their project during the April 22 morning service. As Falwell stood at the pulpit, he seemed unsure what to do about the Biology Club's request – participating with the environmental movement was a topic he had yet to fully devote any time towards. Perhaps if he simply communicated that a trail had opened, he would

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<sup>275</sup> Camp Hydaway is located about a mile and a half from the campus. Set up like a classic 1950s summer camp, Hydaway possesses well-kept lawns, a sandy beach on a lake, and a student center that looks more like a cozy lodge. While the students have access to canoes, kayaks, and even a waterslide, they can also enjoy hikes on nearby trails. For more information and photos see <http://www.liberty.edu/campusrec/camphydaway/> (accessed Oct. 29, 2014).

demonstrate some degree of the pride he typically evidenced when mentioning student activities. He particularly enjoyed giving updates about the school's football team and spoke of the players as hard working, strong Christians. But on this day, he was requested to make an announcement regarding a student club that had, on its own initiative, acted in parallel with an outside social movement.

He stammered "The new nature trail at Camp Hydeaway opens from 2:00 to 4:00 today in keeping with Earth Day, and the biology club at LU, they'll sponsor that. Go by and visit with them from 2:00 to 4:00." He felt the need to clarify the situation and with renewed confidence added, "...while we will do all we can to keep a good clean environment down here, we need to know it's not going to get better, it's going to get worse, and one day God's going to disband this universe as we presently know it. Dissolve it. Remove it. A new Heaven and a new earth will replace it."<sup>276</sup>

Falwell was grasping at straws. If attempts at improvements here on earth did not matter because God would return soon, then why had he worked so hard founding and running the Moral Majority? He knew an ecological crisis existed but, overall, thought it was a secondary problem. Falwell did not quite know what to make of his students wanting to participate in the Earth Day observance and chose to downplay its importance with a poorly structured argument. He was later forced to strengthen his anti-environmental approach because many others in the conservative Protestant

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<sup>276</sup> Asset ID: 223191, Tape No: F1-CMS-0094, Tape Name: JF A Year-End Inventory, Rec Date: 4-22-1990, Tape Series: messages at TRBC- Sunday Morning at TRBC. Communications Department, Liberty University.

community, including fundamentalists, wanted to help save God's earth along with the secular environmental movement.

Earth Day 1990 rejuvenated the secular environmental movement. It was twenty years since the first observance when festivities were held across the United States. In New York's Central Park alone, approximately 750,000 people gathered to hear popular tunes from prominent musicians touting the theme of nature protection. The *New York Times* wondered about the true intentions of the participants by reporting that the crowd did not understand the basic need of recycling because they left the ground littered with trash.<sup>277</sup> Although this Earth Day anniversary seemed to lack the purity of the first, its message reached many places including students at Falwell's university and the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Southern Baptist Convention was aware of the emerging movement towards eco-friendly policies among moderate conservative Protestant groups active in the 1980s. The leadership of the SBC collected articles on evangelical Calvin DeWitt's Au Sable Institute in Minnesota, which had promoted Christian-inspired earth care practices since the mid-1980s. They also knew of the resolution made by a mainline Baptist denomination known as the American Baptist Churches USA, which in 1988 wrote the "American Baptist Policy Statement on Ecology: An Ecological Situational Analysis." The resolution presented a basic Christian environmental stewardship argument and wanted to confront present-day problems including the thinning ozone layer,

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<sup>277</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/04/23/us/earth-day-1990-music-and-oh-yes-earth-day-in-park.html> (accessed Oct. 2, 2014).

deforestation and overpopulation.<sup>278</sup> In the early 1990s SBC moderates like Robert M. Parham wrote pro-environmental articles for the organization's subgroups such as the Christian Life Commission (CLC).<sup>279</sup>

In getting ready for Earth Day, Gary E. Farley, Associate Director of the Town and Country Mission Department, an agency of the SBC, sent Robert Parham material for "Stewardship Week" planned for April 29-May 6, 1990. The information for the public featured a letter by sitting President George H.W. Bush in which he endorsed the activity and stated the need to protect America's vast natural beauty, mentioning that new technology and science were helping in the effort.<sup>280</sup> Like the American Baptist "Ecological Resolution," the well-researched and professionally designed booklet explained the theology behind nature protection and listed present-day problems such as the desertification in sub-Saharan Africa and acid rain. These activities encouraged those within the conservative faction of the SBC to agree that the religious community must participate as good stewards of the environment.

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<sup>278</sup> American Baptist Policy Statement on Ecology, An Ecological Situational Analysis, December 1988. 116.18, Environment: Denominational Statements. SBHLA.

<sup>279</sup> Robertson M. Parham, "Earth Care," Commentary, January 16, 1990, the CLC of the SBC; Robert M. Parham, "The Bible Speaks on Caring for the Earth," unspecified publication, April 28, 1990; Robert M. Parham, "The Bible Speaks on Earth Care," Commentary, March 26, 1990. 117.16, Environment: Southern Baptists. SBHLA.

<sup>280</sup> George H. W. Bush, Soil and Water Stewardship Week, April 29 – May 6, 1990 in Citizens of all Creation, 156.12, AR 138-2, CLC/ERLC Resource Files, Environment: Soil and Water Stewardship Week 1989-1992. SBHA.

In response to these efforts, individual conservative churches joined in, including Crieviewood Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.<sup>281</sup> Their pastor, Joel Snider, stated that at one time the environmental movement seemed like it was all about hippies, but now Christians should get involved. A former church member, Jim Fitch, would be delivering an eco-friendly sermon on the pastor's behalf. Snider concluded, "I hope you will be there to listen to his message and consider a Christian response to saving the environment."<sup>282</sup> Other churches associated with the Southern Baptist Convention and the state conventions demonstrated a desire to become part of the wider environmental endeavor. The SBC went beyond encouragement by taking action itself. By September of 1990 the SBC Home Mission Board had joined in by starting a recycling program and in four months saved almost 150 trees, 2,100 gallons of fuel and 41 cubic yards of landfill space.<sup>283</sup>

Conservative Protestant ecological efforts were not without a backlash. The new pastor at Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, George Mason, received an anonymous anti-environmental flier in the mail. The upset pastor accused the religious right of disseminating the material and slammed "secular-minded rightists" for only caring about human progress and profits.<sup>284</sup> He was sarcastically cryptic about the flier's

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<sup>281</sup> The church's website states that they adhere to a strict infallibility interpretation of the Bible.

<sup>282</sup> Joel Snider, "Celebration of Creation," Crieviewood Family Update, Vol.17, No. 16, April 18, 1990: 1. 117.16, Environment: Southern Baptists. SBHA.

<sup>283</sup> Kelly Capers, "Home Mission Board Begins Recycling Program, Baptist Press, September 28, 1990. 117.16, Environment: Southern Baptists. SBHA.

<sup>284</sup> Pastor George Mason, "Spirit and Stuff," The Wilshire Pulpit, April 22, 1990: 2. 117.16, Environment: Southern Baptists. SBHA.



immediate origin, suggesting that maybe it was dropped in his mail by a congregation member. “I know it didn’t come from our church because the mail I get from our members is always signed, don’t you know?”<sup>285</sup> Mason read directly from the leaflet. “This is a New Age Extravaganza intended to deceive you! It is designed to get you interested in ‘saving the environment.’” The information explained that Earth Day was a ploy to convert people to worshipping the earth and advised readers on how they could recognize the malevolent movement by spotting pet phrases like “protecting mother earth.”<sup>286</sup> Mason thought its message was ridiculous and continued on with a strong Christian environmental stewardship sermon.

Perhaps the most surprising response to Earth Day came from the religious right defender of Christian environmental stewardship, Pat Robertson, who in 1990 released his book *The New Millennium: 10 Trends that will Impact you and your family by the Year 2000*. Here, a conspiracy theory took center stage, echoing Cumbey’s *Dangers of the Rainbow* regarding a one-world government. Robertson did not describe the conspiracy so much as a religion, but more as an army of liberals working toward world domination in hopes of procuring some sort of left-wing utopia. The environmental movement was not the leading force behind the charge, but a method that the conspirators were using to get the job done.

Instead of the traditional compassionate reflections on the health of nature that sat in the background of Robertson’s traditional worldviews, the environment took a

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

prominent role in *The New Millennium* and was featured as the topic of an entire chapter, titled “Technology and the Environment.” He wrote, “The primacy of environmental concerns may hinder technology and prove a front for massive new government spreading intrusion into our lives.”<sup>287</sup> “The environmentalist’s real agenda is not the environment but control and it is always antibusiness and antigrowth. It’s the same bunch of radicals who have been wrong so many times.”<sup>288</sup> Robertson seemed surprised at the recent growth of the environmental movement in 1990. He thought they (environmentalists) came out of the “woodwork” to celebrate Earth Day.<sup>289</sup> He cited the *Wall St. Journal*, which suggested the observance was fueled by nature worship and went on to say that “like the New Agers, these people have lost touch with God Almighty and they are reaching out to nature as their God.”<sup>290</sup>

Within the pages of the *New Millennium*, glimmers of Robertson’s old sympathies towards nature remained somewhat visible. He endorsed President George H.W. Bush for wanting to plant a billion trees in the U.S. and hoped that Africa could do the same to help control sub-Saharan desertification. Robertson also seemed to contradict his endorsements of free enterprise by recommending that society must limit the use of coal and car exhaust. This latter concern he positioned near an unbiased statement that the EPA was working towards controlling global warming, but he never directly connected the two. Nevertheless by the end of the chapter he was back to

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<sup>287</sup> Pat Robertson, *The New Millennium: 10 Trends that Will Impact you and Your Family by the Year 2000* (Dallas: World Publishing, 1990), 209.

<sup>288</sup> Robertson, *The New Millennium*, 226

<sup>289</sup> Robertson, *The New Millennium*, 225 - 226.

<sup>290</sup> Robertson, *The New Millennium*, 227.

criticizing environmentalists, accusing them of being hypocrites. Environmentalism, he declared, was just a fad led by people yelling about pollution who then took a cigarette break, thus hinting they polluted their bodies. He also chided them for wanting to save animals while ignoring the fact that society was allowing the killing of unborn babies in abortion clinics.<sup>291</sup>

What had happened to Robertson? From at least the later 1970s to 1989, his relationship toward the natural world was quite stable and he was unashamed of his compassionate Christian environmental stewardship views.<sup>292</sup> *The New Millennium* looks like something that the Heritage Foundation would applaud, but in the past Robertson was not a cheerleader for the group and had largely ignored their anti-environmental arguments just a few years earlier during his run for the Presidency. In actuality, Robertson's environmental views probably did not change, but were kept private. The new anti-environmental notions expressed in *The New Millennium* were a

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<sup>291</sup> Robertson, *The New Millennium: 10 Trends That Will Impact You and Your Family by the Year 2000* (Dallas, TX: World Publishers, 1990), 238.

<sup>292</sup> The only possible exception to this statement is Robertson's 1982 book *The Secret Kingdom*, in which he explains that there is both a physical and invisible world. By only living in the physical, he argues, humans are limiting themselves. If they look to God, all their needs can be met. This ideology indeed upsets the basic logic behind Christian environmental stewardship, not to mention the secular environmental movement. However, the incongruity did not stop Robertson. The idea that God can take from the invisible/infinite world and give to the physical was not an absolute promise. Robertson was largely banking on the idea that such possibilities give hope to people who need help and he never made the argument that humans in the physical world could use resources without a thought of tomorrow. Later in the 1990s, Robertson returned to his self-help through faith themes and acknowledged that help from God is not a guarantee for everyone. He almost comes across to the reader as saying that God is a personal friend of his and God has come through on various important occasions. God can help others who believe, but Robertson cannot promise anything.

result of political associations Robertson needed to make a stronger impact in the political world.

When Robertson ended his bid for the Presidency in 1989, he wondered what to do with the leftover campaign funds and infrastructure. He listened to an advisor who suggested that he continue energizing and informing his religious supporters who were interested in politics. Thus he founded the still functional Christian Coalition and anointed a bright up-and-coming Christian named Ralph Reed as its head.<sup>293</sup> The organization picked up where the Moral Majority left off. By the late 1980s, the Moral Majority faced a great degree of opposition. All the efforts Falwell had made to build an ecumenical movement to bring America back to God were being cancelled out by an equal if not greater backlash among those who feared a possible theocracy and were repulsed by the negative rhetoric coming from its leaders. In 1989 Falwell realized that the Moral Majority endorsements were actually hurting the candidates they intended to help, so he announced that the group had been successful in its goals and shut it down. But instead of disappearing, the Moral Majority, as representative of the religious right movement, merged into Robertson's new Christian Coalition.

Falwell's position as head of a religious/political organization led him to combine secular conservative goals and perspectives with religious worldviews. Similarly, it is not surprising that Robertson cozied up to more right-wing ideologies.

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<sup>293</sup> For more information see: David John Marley, *Pat Robertson: An American Life* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2007) and David Edwin Harrel, *Pat Robertson: A Life and Legacy* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010).

Although Robertson's name was on the book *The New Millenium*, the man who received "profound appreciation" and whose publishing experience was "responsible for the structure of this book" was an individual named Dr. James Black, also known as Dr. Jim Nelson Black.<sup>294</sup> Black was the executive director of The Wilberforce Forum, a think tank founded by former Watergate conspirator and later Prison Ministries founder, Charles (Chuck) Colson. Today Black bills himself as a senior analyst with Sentinel Research Associates and boasts several publications to his name including *When Nations Die: 10 Warning Signs of a Culture in Crisis*. He additionally assisted General Georges Sada in writing *Saddam's Secrets*. His trademark is speculative theories supported by a variety of somewhat dubious information, bringing him to conclusions such as the existence and location of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, all communicated in a style of rhetoric not too distant from Rush Limbaugh. Black, although a supporter of Judeo-Christian values, writes for those interested in geo-politics and the conflict between conservatives and liberals. Two of Robertson's following books, *The New World Order* (1991) and *The Turning Tide* (1993), intensified the one-world conspiracy theory and further vilified the environmental movement. Robertson was sure to give Black credit for the completion of both volumes.

These books by Robertson represent the beginning of a major shift in the relationship between conservative Protestants and their perceptions of environmental protection. However, like the response towards Williams and Cumbey in the 1980s, the

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<sup>294</sup> Robertson, *The New Millennium*, one page after the dedication. "My profound appreciation goes to Dr. James Black whose indefatigable labor, warm good nature, and vast book publishing experience is responsible for the structure of this work."

larger conservative Protestant community was not falling for the conspiracy theories. The pro-environmental efforts within the Southern Baptist Convention, for example, continued on during the early 1990s.

Despite the looming rise of anti-environmentalism coming from Robertson and elsewhere, as exemplified in the pamphlet at Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, one of the most important pieces of evidence that conservative Protestants of the conservative ilk were making Christian environmental stewardship a top priority was the work of Christian Life Commission's Executive Director, Dr. Richard D. Land. Throughout most of the 1980s Land served as Vice President of Academic Affairs at W.A. Criswell's Bible school, Criswell College, where he had also taught Theology and Church history since 1975. In response to Earth Day, Land spoke out frequently in favor of Christian environmental stewardship. His eco-friendly views did not dissipate after the excitement of Earth Day passed. Instead he made his cause a primary theme at the CLC's 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Seminar held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Fort Worth Texas on March 25-27, 1991. He had little fact sheets printed out for distribution with a picture of the earth in the top right corner encompassed by ideal Christian nature positions supported with Bible verses. These read, "Human Stewardship Gen 1:26, Personal Responsibility Gen 2:15" and in a larger font, "DIVINE OWNERSHIP Ps 24:1."<sup>295</sup>

Like Robertson's 1980 National Affairs Briefing Speech, Land's interest in the environment was safely within the zone of Christian environmental stewardship, but the

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<sup>295</sup> *ENVIRONMENTAL FACTS*, Christian Life Commission, SBC. Inventory of the Christian Life Commission Resource Files, AR 138-2, Box 117, folder 16. SBHLA.

facts used were secular in nature with very little text invested to explain why Christians specifically should be concerned about the earth. The reader got the message simply by looking at data. Some examples included: “About 70 percent of all metal products are used one time and then discarded. More than 200 Million tons of pesticides are used annually in California alone.... The smallest drip of a leaky faucet can waste over 50 gallons a day. Only 3 percent of the world’s water is fresh water.”<sup>296</sup> One fact sheet was titled “ENDANGERED EARTH” “HUMANS ARE CHANGING THE EARTH” followed by a quotation from *Scientific American*, published in April 1989: “The world is warming. Climatic zones are shifting [discussing global warming].... These changes and others are already taking place, and we expect them to accelerate over the next years as the amounts of carbon dioxide, methane and other trace gases accumulating in the atmosphere through human activities increase.”<sup>297</sup> The sheet also quoted other sources making similar claims from various secular publications such as the *Washington Post*, *Gannett News Service*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. The CLC proudly printed these facts on recycled paper.

These fact sheets are particularly important. Dr. Land may have attended secular schools as an undergraduate and graduate student, but he was firmly in tune with the likes of fundamentalist Criswell and was comfortable with the conservative faction of the SBC. In 1979, the SBC experienced a conservative “take-over,” a traumatic event for many within the community. Adrian Rogers was voted in as President that year and

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> *ENDANGERED EARTH*, Christian Life Commission, SBC. Inventory of the Christian Life Commission Resource Files, AR 138-2, Box 117, folder 16. SBHLA.

ever since then the fundamentalist wing of the SBC had made it a point to get their candidate to win each subsequent election. This did not mean that the moderates went away; they complained bitterly about the situation and felt they were a minority and treated as second-class citizens. They responded by lamenting the change and tried countering by publishing their own arguments in hopes of bolstering their numbers by persuasion. Nevertheless, the conservative SBC presidents made changes within the institution by, in a certain sense, purging the ranks – especially taking aim at the seminaries in order to replace professors who did not adhere to an inerrant interpretation of the Bible. Controversy reigned. People called for peace, others reminisced about the “good old days” when things were better. However, by the early 1990s, much of the “purge” was essentially complete. Land, although not a firebrand of the conservative faction, held their respect and fulfilled his role satisfactorily as head of the Christian Life Commission.

To a great extent, by making Christian environmental stewardship a top priority, Lan was stating that it was acceptable for fundamentalists to collectively take action to save God’s earth. Robertson had done this quietly in the 1980s whereas Land was promoting a larger and more pronounced effort. He was trying to move the fundamentalist community into action and was doing it with scientific facts published in the secular media. Furthermore, he was fully embracing the concerns of the environmental movement of the period, most importantly the issue of human-caused global warming.



Global warming became the top environmental priority of the 1990s. It has since become the center of heated debate among the wider American populace while dividing the conservative Protestant community. In 1991 Land, representing the conservatively controlled SBC, found nothing controversial about global warming and added it to the list of problems that good Christian environmental stewards must address. In addition to making environmental awareness a major theme at the CLC's 1991 annual conference, Land promoted similar feelings in articles, and he turned his concerns into a co-edited book, published in 1992.

With the help of fellow SBC employee Louis A. More, Director of Media and Products for the CLC, Land edited a pro-environmental book titled *The Earth is the Lord's: Christians and the Environment*. Land, who wrote the first chapter, relied heavily on philosophies stemming from Francis Schaeffer's *Pollution and the Death of Man* to argue for Christian environmental stewardship. Other authors separated Christian responsibility to the earth from New Age earth worship. The last chapter by Lamar E. Cooper, Sr. titled "How a Local Church Can Begin a Recycling Program," mirrored Land's 1991 fact sheets by listing present-day environmental problems. He included global warming in his group of "seven serious situations." The first three were acid rain, global warming, and ozone depletion. It is interesting that Land did not talk about these problems in his own chapter, but included them in the book. This observation is notable because at this time in 1992, these three specific environmental concerns began to be attacked by different areas in society. The attackers were primarily secular conservative voices, fueled by the upcoming Earth Rio Summit.

## Science and Global Warming

1992 was a pivotal year for environmental concerns. Al Gore published *Earth in the Balance* and worry about the depletion of the ozone layer and global warming reached such new heights that an international summit was called by the United Nations under the title United Nations Conference on Environmental Development (UNCED) and held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on June 3-14, 1992. In response, representatives from 172 countries attended and 116 sent their heads of state or government in addition to 2,400 delegates from non-governmental organizations. One of the top priorities was trying to figure out ways to control climate change, which they concluded stemmed from humanity burning fossil fuels. The pressure to participate was so great that President George H.W. Bush, who planned to skip the event, changed his mind. Secular free enterprise conservatives knew they must counter the movement or face a host of new profit-curbing regulations. Paul Weyrich of the Committee for a Free Congress found himself on the ground floor of the business world's response. Senior Principal Hilary Sills of Capitoline International Group, LTD, for example, wrote Congressman Tom DeLay and sent a copy to Weyrich: "Congratulations on the good work you are doing to lend some common sense to the semi-hysterical debate over global warming. I have been working in this area since 1989 and it is only recently that affected industries have come to life to confront the threat to our economy." Sills continued, writing that she felt their approach worked: "The conservative groups' assault on the White House vis-à-vis the UNCED Rio meetings has had a beneficial effect and at least prevented the White

House from acceding to a much more damaging climate change convention.”<sup>298</sup> Later in the letter, Sills pushed the need for more scientific information to reach the American public in hopes of debunking environmental efforts: “Much of the science has been politicized. In an age of growing scientific illiteracy, distorted risk perceptions, committed advocacy by environmental activists and a sympathetic press, the ‘apocalyptic’ view gains greater currency than warranted by the facts.”<sup>299</sup> Although Sills is only one example among the free enterprise conservatives that the business community launched to combat the environmental movement, it was precisely her strategy they used to get the job done and impede the movement toward United States eco-friendly resolutions.

Weyrich was quick to take action, following up Sill’s suggestions by supporting Dixy Lee Ray, the former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission under the Nixon Administration who later served as the Governor of Washington State. Ray earned her doctorate in biology at Stanford University, taught zoology at the University of Washington and conducted postdoctoral research at Cal Tech. She was given honorary degrees throughout her life, including one from Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts. Clearly an expert in her field, her conclusions on scientific matters

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<sup>298</sup> Hilary Sills to the Honorable Tom DeLay, May 21, 1992. Paul M. Weyrich Collection, Box 22, Folder 2. UWA.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid. The letter further states: “To help business and conservatives combat the inevitable, I strongly agree on the need for an information clearinghouse to provide the free market environmentalist arguments. Certainly, with expenditures at over \$1 billion a year on the world climate research, the U.S. has a story to tell, yet receives little or no credit for this effort at home or abroad. This figure does not include private sector research.”

carried weight and she would be one of the first to authenticate Sill's conclusion that the worries over the environment were just hysterics.

On May 21, 1992 the *Cadillac Evening News* out of Cadillac, Michigan reported that Ray, whose words were legitimized by listing her scientific background and public service record, criticized environmental worries as "scare tactics." She remarked that acid rain was not killing forests after all and pointed out that other concerns regarding asbestos and dioxin were unfounded. "I'm riled up" she said and continued by stating that all the hysteria about these three potential problems were leading to a "...waste of money and the unnecessary disruption of people's lives..." which go unchallenged in the media.<sup>300</sup> Through common newspapers such as the *Cadillac Evening News*, in addition to Ray's 1990 book that argued similar viewpoints including negating human-caused global warming, these "expert" conclusions reached the general public. The book was titled *Trashing the Planet: How Science Can Help Us Deal with Acid Rain, Depletion of the Ozone, and Nuclear Waste (among other things)*.

The conservative free enterprise organization, The Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), subsequently realized the value of Ray and paid for her to travel to the Earth Rio Summit where she stayed at the Copacabana Palace. The group made sure Ray's environmental views reached the public by reserving the Red Room for a press

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<sup>300</sup> Philip C. Clarke, "Hyping environmental scare stories," *Cadillac Evening News*, May 21, 1992. Paul M. Weyrich Collection, Box 22, Folder 2. UWA.

conference.<sup>301</sup> Paul Weyrich was quite pleased with the efforts of the CEI's president, Fred Smith, and congratulated him on June 11, writing "your expertise and commitment to the truth of the environmentalist agenda was invaluable to this project [called the "Earth Summit Alternatives"].... Hopefully, the movement [conservatives] will begin to get more involved in the environment issue in the future."<sup>302</sup> Like Smith, Weyrich knew the significance of Ray to their cause and comforted other business leaders by expressing her impact on the public. On June 15 Weyrich wrote Richard L. Lawson at the National Coal Association (who once lobbied Robertson's presidential campaign in 1988) and soothed concerns, saying that Ray had spoken on the Rush Limbaugh Show from the Earth Rio Summit and was contributing to a greater understanding of environmental extremism.<sup>303</sup>

Around this same time and most likely in response to free enterprise efforts to combat "hysterics" as well as to perhaps quell criticisms that the media was biased, mainstream news agencies such as *USA Today* offered opposing viewpoints when running stories on the need for environmental protection. The Southern Baptist Convention cut out and added these stories to their files on ecology. The news pieces featured "experts" who wrote opposing viewpoints on the same issue. Some examples include articles titled "Don't Abandon Wetlands" presented next to "Use Sense with

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<sup>301</sup> Diane Galina to Richard B. Dingman Executive Vice President of the Free Congress Foundation, facsimile for bill Dixy Lee Ray's stay at the Copacabana Palace, May 19, 1992. Paul M. Weyrich Collection, Box 22, Folder 2. UWA.

<sup>302</sup> Paul M. Weyrich to Fred Smith, June 11, 1992. Acc:#10138, Box 22, Folder 2, Rio Earth Summit. Paul M. Weyrich Collection. UWA.

<sup>303</sup> Paul M. Weyrich to Richard L. Lawson, June 15, 1992. Paul M. Weyrich Collection, Box 22, Folder 2. UWA..

Wetlands”<sup>304</sup> and “Manage Wild Game Wisely” next to “Don’t Kill Wild Animals.”<sup>305</sup> Additionally, the “mainstream” newspaper *The Wall St. Journal* also weighed into the ecological issues of the day, frequently criticizing the environmental movement. On April 30, 1992 they accused environmentalists of targeting the public school system. The story was titled “Seen and Heard: Schoolchildren Are Learning Ecology as Activists, Some Parents and Teachers Urge Youths to Become Environmental Critics: It’s Indoctrination” by Frank Edward Allen. Allen reported that schoolteachers were telling students that the environment is dying and students come home with depressing views of the future. Robert C. Gore, a senior partner in the management consulting firm of Towers Perrin, was quoted as saying that students have “decided the world is not going to be as nice a place when they are adults” and that some teachers are “trying to transfer a sense of guilt to the kids.”<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Our View, “Don’t abandon wetlands” and Stuart Hardy, “Use sense with wetlands,” *USA Today*, December 12, 1991. Inventory of the Christian Life Commission Resource Files, AR 138-2, Box 117, folder 16. SBHLA.

<sup>305</sup> Our View “Manage wild game wisely” and Christine Jackson, “Don’t kill wild animals,” *USA Today*, January 13, 1993, p. 10-A. Inventory of the Christian Life Commission Resource Files, AR 138-2, Box 117, folder 16. SBHLA.

<sup>306</sup> Frank Edward Allen, “Seen and Heard: Schoolchildren Are Learning Ecology as Activists, Some Parents and Teachers urge Youths to Become Environmental Activists, Critics: It’s Indoctrination,” *Wall St. Journal*, April 31, 1992. Inventory of the Christian Life Commission Resource Files, AR 138-2, Box 117, folder 16. SBHLA.

## Anti-Environmentalism Gains a Foothold

Between 1992 and 1993 the arguments by credentialed science skeptics had an impact on the conservative Protestant community. At the Institute for Creation Research (ICR) the change was noticeable. In December of 1992 the founder of the ICR, Henry M. Morris, PhD, combined evolution, the New Age Movement and the environmental movement together. He argued that evolution stemmed from paganism and quoted Dr. Stanley Jaki, who, Morris was quick to add, held “doctorates in both physics and theology.” Jaki confirmed the universality of ancient pagan evolution. Morris concluded that the green parties in Europe are, at their base, a Gaia religion, which “appeals naturally to scientifically innocent individuals who worry about the environment.... This theme is being continually emphasized in public school classrooms today and, with the recent election results, is almost certain to become a major theme in the new federal administration based on the selection of a vice president whose best-selling 1992 book, *Earth in the Balance*... is so passionately devoted to such concepts.”<sup>307</sup> He also accused the United Nations of trying to take part in earth worship, a comment made in reference to the Rio Earth Summit.

Although Morris’s 1992 argument was situated largely in the earth worship conspiracy, by May of 1993 fellow ICR researcher Ronald L. Cooper approached current concern for the environment differently by incorporating a sympathetic free

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<sup>307</sup> Henry M. Morris, “Pantheistic Evolution,” *Impact* December No. 234 1992 Pantheistic. Hall-Hoag Collection. BUA.

enterprise viewpoint backed by “experts” from the science community who argued that climate change is a boon to the earth. “While there is a disagreement among climatologists regarding the significance of the “greenhouse” effect, there seems to be more agreement among other investigators that cutting back significantly on greenhouse gas emissions would have more serious negative worldwide impacts, with large Gross Domestic Product reductions, resulting in lower living standards in the long run.”<sup>308</sup>

He validated his conclusions by citing Dr. Sherwood B. Idso: “Dr. Sherwood B. Idso, a research physicist with the U.S. Water Conservation Laboratory, Phoenix, Arizona, has found that the ‘greenhouse effect’ could be beneficial rather than harmful to the planet.”<sup>309</sup> Cooper reassured the reader that if CO<sup>2</sup> levels rise too much, the earth has built-in global stabilizing factors provided by God. The proof he claimed was that CO<sup>2</sup> levels must have been incredibly high in antediluvian times, but because the earth was designed so well, they naturally dissipated.<sup>310</sup> This argument interpreting global warming as a benefit echoes views expressed in a film produced by the Western Fuels Association, a business-centered group that supplied coal to western utilities. The documentary titled *The Greening of Planet Earth* was released nationwide and ultimately affected the political position of members in Congress.<sup>311</sup>

Elsewhere in the religious community, Pastor Peter J. Leithart of the Reformed Heritage Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, wrote a booklet published by

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<sup>308</sup> Ronald L. Cooper, “The Greenhouse Effect and Pre-Flood Days,” *Impact*, May 1993. Hall-Hoag Collection, Brown University Archives, BUA.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time* (New York: Oxford University Press), 81,82.



Corral Ridge Ministries titled “The Green Movement: Its False Claims and Religious Agenda.” Leithart was troubled by those who thumb their noses at the rapture but then warn that the world is coming to an end due to environmental degradation. He wrote that Christians should “be at the forefront in objecting to abuse of God’s creation, and should cry the loudest when governments and businesses conspire, as they often do, to destroy God’s world.”<sup>312</sup> The majority of the booklet, however, was dedicated to disarming the general arguments coming from the environmental movement. He cited Dixy Lee Ray as an expert source in debunking extremism such as prohibiting the use of DDT and, more notably, he cited her conclusion that changes in the climate could easily be a consequence of volcanic activity.<sup>313</sup>

This interpretation of global warming promoted by a handful of credentialed scientists as well as conservative think tanks and big business associations not only affected the ICR and individuals like Leithart, but influenced Christian school material beginning in 1993. During the 1980s A Beka textbooks stayed away from heavily delving into the issue of ecology. They strongly promoted forest conservation and cautioned the overuse of pesticides but did not speak to the problem as much as Bob Jones University publications. A Beka’s 1989 book on economics, however, took a

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<sup>312</sup> Peter J. Leithart, *The Green Movement: It’s False Claims and Religious Agenda*, (Ft. Lauderdale: Coral Ridge Ministries, 1992), introduction.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-21 (DDT) 36-37 (climate change) Leithart makes sure to highlight Dixy Lee Ray’s credentials before discussing her views on climate change as a natural phenomenon: “Dixy Lee Ray, former governor of Washington and chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, says...”

solid stand in favor of the environment. But in 1993 this view was decisively overturned in their textbook *Science: Order & Reality*.

Editor Laura Hicks and her co-writers initiated their repudiation of environmentalist concerns by discrediting acid rain. They asked “Is acid rain really ‘poison falling out of the sky?’.... Although modern civilization may contribute to the acidity of rainwater, studies indicate that acid rain has existed for up to 350 years, since before there were factories or motor vehicles to introduce acid-causing pollutants into the atmosphere.”<sup>314</sup> The book interpreted the 1990 Integrated Assessment Report released by the U.S. National Acid Precipitation Assessment Program<sup>315</sup> to drive home the point that acid rain is not the problem that environmentalists once thought; the coup de grâce was the inferred criticism that the government had spent a ridiculous amount of money on a myth. They wrote that the study took ten years and \$500 million of the “taxpayers’ money” and found that only 4% of lakes were dangerously acidic and the average acidic lake was not a consequence of the Industrial Revolution.<sup>316</sup> In a tone of disbelief, they followed this information by describing the subsequent illogical government decision to pass the Clean Air Act of 1990 which cost “\$40 billion”

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<sup>314</sup> Laurel Hicks et al. *Science: Order & Reality*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Pensacola: Beka Books, 1993): 20. “After 10 years and \$500 million in taxpayers’ money had been spent on the project, the scientists of NAPAP came back with a startlingly good report. They determined that only 4% of lakes surveyed were dangerously acidic and that the average acidic lake had been naturally acidic before the Age of Industry.”

<sup>315</sup> The U.S. National Acid Precipitation Assessment Program was a ten-year study sponsored by the federal government to gauge the effects of acid rain. The Report indeed suggested that acid rain was not having the disastrous effects once thought. However, others in the scientific community were unhappy with the report and challenged such viewpoints.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

targeting acid rain, a non-problem. The authors advised the reader to stay informed on similar topics so they could voice opinions to representatives in the government.<sup>317</sup>

Hicks and her fellow writers then took on for the first time the issue of global warming in a separate section. The short poem at the top of the page concisely clarified their position. “Roses are red, Violets are blue; they both grow better with more CO<sub>2</sub>.”<sup>318</sup> The explanation that followed attacked human-caused global warming on two levels. The first was simply denying that it existed with a scientific-sounding approach: “According to records kept over the past 100 years however, there has been no significant change in the earth’s overall temperature – *there has been no global warming.*”<sup>319</sup> This statement somewhat contradicted the next observation that “environmentalists” never look at the positives. For example, the authors reasoned, “Scientists generally agree that a rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide would result in a substantial increase in plant productivity; and since plants account for 95% of the earth’s food supply, a carbon-dioxide rise would actually benefit all life on earth.”<sup>320</sup> Additionally, “the amount of greenhouse gases produced by industrial processes is very small.”<sup>321</sup> The authors paired these viewpoints by discrediting concerns towards the

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid. “Taking action. In spite of this encouraging information provided by NAPAP, the Clean Air Act of 1990 – proposing solutions for acid rain that would require expenses totaling \$40 billion – was passed by Congress a short time later. As Christians and responsible citizens, it is our duty to stay informed on such important topics as acid rain so that, through letters and telephone calls to our representatives, we can voice our views on these issues.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 167

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

depletion of the ozone layer: “According to some atmospheric scientists, this weakening of the ozone layer is caused predominantly by solar flares, not pollutants, and the ozone layer has undergone a regular trend of thinning and refilling since the hole was first detected, indicating that this cycle is probably a harmless process of nature.”<sup>322</sup>

Hicks et al. left the student with the information that popular worry about environmental topics including acid rain, the ozone layer, and global warming are unwarranted and called it “undue alarm.” Such concern was the product of “inaccurate experimental evidence” hyped by environmentalists and the news media.<sup>323</sup> The reader was then comforted by an assurance that God would not let environmental problems become dangerous. “As Christians, however, we must remember that God provided certain “checks and balances” in creation to prevent many of the global upsets that have been predicted by environmentalists. We know from God’s promise in Genesis 8:22 that ‘while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.’” The authors then validated stewardship while actively minimizing or, in other words, negating any need for it in the first place: “While it is our responsibility to do all within our power to protect the world God has given us, we must always bear in mind that the fate of the earth rests not in the hands of chance but in the hands of its all-powerful Creator.”<sup>324</sup>

In other sections in the text, the authors echoed Dixy Lee Ray’s attempt to put the dangers of pesticides into perspective by comparison with other hazards. For

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

instance, the number of accidental deaths per year caused by motor vehicles was listed at 50,000, swimming accidents 3,000, bicycle accidents 1,000, pesticide use 30.<sup>325</sup> After all, the reader was told, pesticides like DDT were tested on animals in enormous quantities and in the real world no one would ever be exposed to such an amount. Furthermore, it is the right of humanity to use pesticides, justified by Genesis 1:28 in which God commanded that humanity exercise dominion.<sup>326</sup> The authors continued by specifically citing chapter six of Dixy Lee Ray's book *Trashing the Planet* in which she validated the use of DDT and discredited environmentalists.

If Robertson's book the *New Millennium* signifies the beginning of anti-environmentalism knocking on the door of mainstream conservative Protestant culture, then *Science: Order & Reality* marks its first step across the threshold. Anti-environmental tendencies were visible within the community in previous decades but lingered in the backrooms of individual political thought largely derived from secular conservatives. These previous anti-environmental views were usually couched in accusations of nature worship with touches of the need to protect free enterprise, now a major component of American Christian nationalism. The argument only became greatly strengthened by citing experts who interpreted scientific studies so as to undercut and deny the largest environmental issues of the day. These critical experts made it possible for conservative Protestants to legitimately dismiss the growing environmental support in their own community in response to events like Earth Day 1990 and the Earth

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 470.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

Rio Summit. Like A Beka Books, which had finally taken a firm partisan position on the environmental debate, Jerry Falwell expressed his opinion on the matter using an effective and interesting strategy.

Shortly after Earth Day 1992 Jerry Falwell spoke about the environmental movement. Before delving into the topic, he first praised Senator Jessie Helms for having the courage to standing up and declare that homosexuality is wrong and the cause of the AIDS virus. This comment received applause from the congregation. Falwell then dove into global warming and approached it as a joke. “And then there is another subject. Boy, they’re talking about global warming. The disappearance of the ozone layer. They got me under convictions putting hairspray on my head.”<sup>327</sup> The congregation responded with laughter and they continued to let Falwell know they agreed with what else he had to say. He first had to say he liked God’s earth: “I think there ought to be national parks and I think we ought to as best we can to preserve the wonderful creations of nature God has provided for us.” Falwell then invalidated what he had just said by equating nature preservation with absurdity and hypocrisy, couching his remarks in humor.

“But these tree huggers [laughter] who want to save the snail darter and spotted owl and who want to save the whale and demonstrate outside the fur stores, they don’t want any more fur coats and those hypocrites go right

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<sup>327</sup> Asset ID: 223386, Tape No: F1-CMS-0298.mov, Tape Name: JF “We Keep Changing the Subject”, We Keep Changing the Subject II Corinthians 4:3-5, Tape Series Messages at TRBC – Sunday Morning at TRBC, Record Date: 05-31-1992. Communications Department, Liberty University.

across the street to McDonalds and eat a hamburger. Where do you think that hamburger comes from? [little laughter] Some animal sacrificed his life to provide you that Big Mac [little laughter] Big deal, bring another one.”

Falwell’s tone then became serious when he brought in the topic of abortion to crush any lingering compassion congregants may have held towards environmental protection. Unlike his supportive and compassionate words about animal rights in the early 1980s, his rhetoric was angry and dismissive.<sup>328</sup> “The question I’d ask these people, how long since you demonstrated outside an abortion clinic? You want to save those snail darters, spotted owls and whales and other furry animals - how about those babies? You hypocrites, shut your mouth [the congregation responded with “amen”].... You call yourself a moral environmentalist. I’m glad our president is not going to the Earth Summit, unless he’s going to go down there and preach.”<sup>329</sup>

Falwell apparently did not understand global warming at this time. He linked it with the depletion of the ozone layer, his points were disjointed and furthermore did not utilize any particular arguments from the scientific community. Instead, he made a joke out of the environmental movement. His congregation followed suit and enjoyed hearing his perspective, which was underscored by his accusations of hypocrisy when comparing it to the religious community’s serious dedication to end abortion.

Throughout his career, Falwell devised a series of arguments against the environmental movement, but none were developed beyond a few sentences. Instead,

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<sup>328</sup> See Chapter Two page 71.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

what seemed to make his argument effective was his use of humor and ridicule. Although he had to acknowledge that nature was a creation of God, he framed his message in humorous terms and dismissed the environmental movement as a bunch of “tree huggers.” Two years earlier, the biology club at Falwell’s Liberty University was undoubtedly proud of the trail they sponsored when they encouraged fellow students and members of Thomas Road Baptist Church to come by on Earth Day and talk with them about the observance. But now Farwell had squelched the opportunity for anyone in his community to take future proactive environmental measures. He could not accomplish this goal by stating that such efforts were not in accordance to the Scriptures. Indeed, he had to validate the worth of God’s creation but negate any efforts at protection by making fun of it. He mocked those who felt sympathy for and wanted to save any species that God made, such as the spotted owls or the trees in the forest.

Public humiliation in any situation has the power to force conforming behavior. Whether it is instigated by children on the playground or adults in a business meeting, embarrassment hurts and the degree that it stings depends not only on what is said but on the social structure in which it is employed. Ridicule demeans the value of the people(s) within the community. Mocking is an amazingly effective tool for social conformity and can lead as far as suicide if the recipient cannot find any avenue back to the realm of acceptance. It is easy to imagine the impact of such behavior among conservative Protestants, who as devout followers, not only regularly attend services together, but often socialize with each other outside of church. The pressure can be greater still for students, who attend Christian schools during the week, play organized sports in the



same institution, and then attend the affiliated church on Sundays. Conservative Protestants build close-knit communities – even if the church is made up of thousands of members as is Thomas Road Baptist Church. Thus, social acceptance for many conservative Protestants is an important objective.

In 1988 a group of political scientists published an article explaining the surprising conforming behavior that takes place within church communities. University of Florida political scientists Kenneth D. Wald, Dennis E. Owen and Samuel S. Hill Jr. published an article titled “Churches and Political Communities,” featured in the *American Political Science Review*. By taking a survey of the individuals and the congregation as a whole, Wald et al. showed a small variance between the political views of individuals in churches. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this study is that the authors found that although the individual’s political attitudes conformed to those of the church they attended, their personal theology did not. Over 40 percent of those in each church had a noticeable discrepancy in religious views.<sup>330</sup> The implications of these findings are quite significant: people go to church for spiritual guidance, but their political views conform to those around them. Falwell was making sure his congregation conformed to his political viewpoints by using an effective strategy.

The tactic of ridiculing environmentalists sprang up in other places within the conservative Protestant community, in the campus publications of Robertson’s Regent University for example. One 1994 political cartoon in their newspaper read, “Guess

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<sup>330</sup> Kenneth Wald et al., “Churches and Political Communities,” *American Political Science Review* 82, no. 2 [June 1988]: 545.

which service the Clintons want to reform.” Underneath were two boxes, the left, “The best health care system in the world...” and the right, “or public education?”<sup>331</sup> The health care illustration presented the reader with a depiction of a serious physician running a scan and the other was an unruly classroom. While the teacher read “Sex ed. News,” students bullied each other. The blackboard read, “Reading test: How many mommies does Heather have?” Another poster in the background encouraged students to “Save the Earth.”<sup>332</sup> A year earlier, the newspaper ran a political cartoon in the editorial section featuring a female teacher sporting a short haircut and a pantsuit, standing between a condom machine and a poster of the earth encircled by the statement “Love Your Mother.”<sup>333</sup>

The accompanying articles that discussed the environment took a similar comedic tone. The Heritage Foundation President Edwin Feulner, for example, wrote an article titled “Compulsive Environmentalism: Only on the Weekends.” He demeaned the environmental movement as being the result of America’s need to be a part of some “public nuisance” that oddly came around every fifty years.<sup>334</sup> He dismissed the “screwball assertions of global doom” in Al Gore’s book *Earth In The Balance* and did the same with concerns over the diminishing ozone layer. Feulner stated that phasing out CFCs to “save” the ozone would cost taxpayers tens of billions of dollars, a waste of

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<sup>331</sup> Chuck Asay, “Guess Which Service the Clintons Want to Reform” 1993, *The Paper*, January 1994. RUA.

<sup>332</sup> Asay, “Guess Which Service the Clintons Want to Reform.”

<sup>333</sup> Reggie McElhannon ed. *The Paper*, February 1993. RUA.

<sup>334</sup> Edwin Feulner, “Compulsive Environmentalism – Only on Weekends” *The Paper*, September 1993. RUA.

money because scientists concluded the depletion was "...a natural, temporary phenomenon: gases from the 1991 eruption of a volcano in the Philippines!"<sup>335</sup> In another magazine produced by Regent titled *Focus*, headlines read: "More than Global Warming: One-Worlders May be Pushing Politics with Disaster" and "Ecofeminism."<sup>336</sup>

By April of 1994 Falwell had decided that global warming and the depletion of the ozone layer was not real. He concluded both were a fabricated product of environmentalists and he communicated his view reinforced with a dose of sarcasm. Falwell spoke to his smiling congregants: "Oh we were hearing so much about how we were all going to scorch if we didn't stop using hairspray. I never did stop even when I didn't know it wasn't true."<sup>337</sup> The structure of his arguments throughout the 1990s included a dismissal of a subject like global warming as something promoted by "new agers" and a forgone conclusion that the issue was a fraud, almost delivered as common knowledge fortified with comedy.

### What a Friend Industry has in the Religious Right

The religious right movement originated on the firm foundation of protecting the health of the "traditional" family from attacks by progressive advocate groups. While

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<sup>335</sup> Feulner, "Compulsive Environmentalism – Only on Weekends."

<sup>336</sup> Randall J. Barnett, "More Than Just Global Warming: One-worlders may be pushing politics with disaster" *Focus*, Summer 1990, 21.; Melissa Ann Wallace, "Ecofeminism," *Focus*, Fall 1991, 26. RUA.

<sup>337</sup> Jerry Falwell, "The Greatest News Story in History," April 3, 1994. Messages at TRBC Sunday Morning, LUA. 9:32:17:19. Communications Department Liberty University.

the religious right cared greatly about family structure, they eventually came to place an equal amount of trust in free enterprise, which attained a greater level of importance than potential immediate physical health dangers. Instead of erring on the side of caution when safety advocate groups spoke out, Falwell, as one of the most powerful voices in the religious right, encouraged skepticism. Frequently, when faced with a conflict between the environment, health, and business, Falwell advised followers to believe what he called “real scientists.” Real scientists to him were invariably the ones that gave him the answer he wanted, and most often it favored business.

In April of 2000 the President of the Christian Coalition, Roberta Combs, Jerry Falwell, and Richard Land of the SBC, along with a handful of others, drafted and signed an official statement regarding environmental issues titled “A Faith Community Commitment to the Environment and Our Children’s Future.”<sup>338</sup> The need to protect the environment was addressed in the form of simple lip service by the authors, overshadowed by stronger concern for America’s economy – a theme heightening the importance of capitalism, a central element by this date in their understanding of American Christian nationalism. They promised “To never forget that America was founded on the principle of expanding economic opportunity and economic justice for all citizens, especially for the economically disadvantaged. To this end, environmental policies must not close doors to opportunity for our poorest citizens, but open and expand their opportunities to share in the American Dream...to implement policies that

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<sup>338</sup> Roberta Combs et al. A Faith Community Commitment to the Environment and Our Children’s Future, 2000. Christian Life Commission Resource Files AR 138-2, box 116, folder 12. SBHLA.

protect the future job opportunities for our children and grandchildren and to protect their right to enjoy the natural resources and beauty of America that is your heritage.”<sup>339</sup>

These statements should be understood as an indirect attack on global warming, a possible threat sometimes dismissed by common citizens who cannot see or feel changes in the global temperature and would rather err on the side of the more immediate rewards of financial stability. The Faith Commitment also offered an example of why people should not “blindly” follow health advice offered by scientists. The document pledged “to improve the environment through the application of scientific and technological knowledge.” But to highlight what this really meant, they used the example of the 1989 ALAR scare.<sup>340</sup>

As Kerry E. Rodgers explains in “Multiple Meanings of ALAR after the Scare: Implications for Closure” in the journal of *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, worries about the growth-regulating ALAR’s carcinogen potential was in reality negligible, but people took different lessons away from the debate and used the situation to promote their own agendas. The religious right used it to plant seeds of distrust among followers towards the media and scientists who, they believed, were coming to conclusions spurred on by biased political motivations. Falwell et al. used the ALAR scare to protect industry and blame whistleblowers who used “bad” science to destroy capitalism and put children at risk of a nutritional deficiency because parents stopped

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<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid. “For example, the ALAR scare caused millions of moms to stop giving apples and apple juice to their children. This politically motivated scare was not based on sound science. It had negative health effects on the nation’s youth and it caused massive economic dislocation in the apple industry.”

buying apples after the investigative television news program *60 Minutes* warned viewers not to buy products coated in ALAR.

The example of the ALAR scare was not a major point consistently raised by the religious right throughout the 1990s or 2000s. But rather than seeing the debate over the chemical as an isolated event, the authors of the Faith Commitment employed the story to dismiss future health concerns by pointing out the fallibility of the science community. Furthermore, and most importantly, the ALAR example signifies that Falwell et al. possessed the propensity to believe industry over consumer advocates. In other words, there was less concern about their follower's physical wellbeing than the health of American industry. Evidence of this conclusion can be found in various other areas within the religious right.

Conservative Protestant trust in industry within the area of pesticides illuminates the close relationship between these two groups, particularly since the mid-1990s. For example, in 1993 A Beka Books accused environmentalists of incorrectly warning that DDT would lead bird populations into extinction and cited the Audubon Society's annual accounts as concluding that no concern was necessary. Pesticides, the authors wrote, are God-ordained through the dominion command in Genesis and mankind should have domain over all living things on earth. "Because environmentalists do not recognize that God appointed man to be superior to the rest of creation, they often attack

pesticides as cruel disruptions of nature rather than praising them as remarkable developments in human progress.”<sup>341</sup>

In contrast, back in 1986, A Beka Books’ *Biology: God’s Living Creation* presented the reader with a balanced approach to the use of pesticides. The authors even promoted more “natural” ways to control pests, such as reducing the next generation by releasing a large population of sterile male insects into a given area.<sup>342</sup> Rachel Carson suggested this method in her 1962 book *Silent Spring* as an alternative to using pesticides like DDT. The 1986 A Beka textbook also cited other harmful results of using potent chemicals, warning they may kill helpful insects along with the pests. This section was rather short, but in the next edition of the textbook, released in 1997, confidence in industry, including pesticides and food additives, rose dramatically.

The new edition described food additives, BHT, coloring agents, aspartame, sorbitol and saccharin as more than fine for human consumption. The text assured the reader “Food additives and preservatives are tested for safety by high-dose rodent tests, in which a group of laboratory rats are fed in extraordinary doses of the additive being tested....” When the rats eventually die of old age, they are autopsied and searched for tumors. “Because the doses used in the rodent tests are so high, any additive that passes these tests is almost certainly completely harmless at normal doses.”<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Laurel Hicks et al. *Science: Order & Reality*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Pensacola: A Beka Books, 1993): 471.

<sup>342</sup> Keith Graham, *Biology: God’s Living Creation*, (Pensacola, Florida: A Beka Books, 1986): 513.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

Pesticides were also presented as “almost certainly completely harmless.” The book told the reader to remember that “(1) most synthetic pesticides are designed to be less toxic to humans than many natural pesticides, and (2) synthetic pesticides can be washed off the food after the food is harvested because they are applied to the outside of the plant; natural pesticides, on the other hand, remain inside the plant and are consumed when the food is eaten.”<sup>344</sup> Furthermore, the authors wrote that by the time the synthetic pesticide reaches the consumer only 1/10,000 of the residue remains on food. The science book went so far as to say that God intended for humans to consume artificial products along with the natural. “However, neither the natural residues nor the synthetic residues are cause for concern because God has designed our bodies to easily break down these substances (a job performed by special cells in the liver). In fact, studies have shown that *eating large amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables - pesticide residues and all - can cut your risk of cancer in half.*”<sup>345</sup> Obviously, readers were meant to feel comforted knowing that business protected the consumer and could benefit from industrial and scientific progress.

The biology textbook went so far as to accuse those who advocated for foods without the pesticides of endangering the health of the consumer.

“Unfortunately, these insect-resistant plants are also more toxic to *people*. For example, one insect-resistant variety of celery sold as a “pesticide free” food has nearly eight

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<sup>344</sup> Jean Spitsbergen, Heather Fulfer, Brian Ashbaugh, *Biology: God's Living Creation* (Pensacola, Florida: A Beka Books, 1998), 234.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.



times the toxic psoralens of normal food celery, making it so toxic that some people break out in rashes just from touching it. (In addition, psoralens have caused genetic mutations and cancer in high-dose rodent tests.) In another case, a “pesticide-free” potato was pulled from the market because its high levels of nerve poisons made it toxic to humans.”<sup>346</sup>

In addition to praising human progress in the world of industrial science research and development, free enterprise overall continued in the conservative Protestant community as it had since the 1980s, as a pervasive theme, especially in the history books of both Bob Jones University Press and A Beka Books. Back in the 1970s, the poor and rural dwellers were praised as virtuous God-fearing Americans. In 1974 for example, Andrew Carnegie was quoted saying that he pitied the sons and daughters of the rich because there was “more genuine satisfaction in life and more obtained from life in the humble cottages of the poor man than in the palaces of the rich.” This quotation came from A Beka Books patriotic reader *Liberty Tree*, which also featured a nature appreciation piece by naturalist John Burroughs, who described the wonders and beauty of “mother earth.” In the next edition, published in 1998, the section by Burroughs disappeared and Carnegie’s quotation was altered to suggest that satisfaction does not come with being poor, but through hard work individuals can improve their lives. “People moan about poverty as a great evil and think that if people only had plenty of money, they would be happy and useful and get more out of life. Yet if you will read the

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<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

list of the world's most famous people, you will find that most of them were born poor and learned early how to work hard to help themselves and others.”<sup>347</sup>

The Faith Commitment drafted in 2000 stands out as an official statement signed by a co-founder of the religious right, Jerry Falwell, and a representative of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition. It reflects the rising importance of free enterprise within the world of the conservative Protestant community, at least among the elite, and the trust they learned to invest in it. The document also signifies an odd change of views by the other notable signer, Richard Land of the SBC, who served as executive president of the Christian Life Commission. As previously described, during the early 1990s Land went well beyond just promoting Earth Day 1990 to incorporating top environmental issues like taking action against global warming. By 2000 it was apparent that he had bowed to Christian climate change deniers and stepped in line with his fundamentalist/politically conservative peers.

Land not only signed the Faith Commitment statement of 2000, but also a similar and more popular resolution created the same year called “The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship.” This document directly denied anthropogenic global warming. It stated “Some unfounded or undue concerns include fears of destructive manmade global warming, overpopulation, and rampant species loss.” These “fake”

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<sup>347</sup> The Liberty Tree: Of America Reading Series 1998, My First Job by Andrew Carnegie (adapted), Last paragraph (different than 1974 edition) p.35. The original quotation came from Carnegie's writings titled *The Gospel of Wealth, and Other Essays* under the heading “How I served my Apprenticeship” first published in 1962. For the original quotation see Chapter 3 page 100. The A Beka Book authors made up this altered version to fit their capitalistic “do it yourself” message.

problems were contrasted with the “real.” “While some environmental concerns are well founded and serious, others are without foundation or greatly exaggerated. Some well-founded concerns focus on human health problems in the developing world arising from inadequate sanitation, widespread use of primitive biomass fuels like wood and dung, and primitive agricultural, industrial and commercial practices; distorted resource consumption patterns driven by perverse economic incentives...” It is interesting that these problems are thought to originate in developing countries, therefore corrective solutions would not directly threaten the U.S. economy. Global warming, however, a problem that demanded action by all, was thought to be “unfounded.”

The Faith Commitment and the Cornwall Declaration are not examples of the conservative Protestant community finally taking a small step in the right direction towards slowly embracing eco-friendly viewpoints. Such an argument might be valid if they had previously ignored the health of the environment or if they held more extreme anti-environmental viewpoints. On the contrary, these documents were a decade in the making, beginning in the early 1990s when pastors such as Falwell started speaking out against the Christian eco-friendly response to Earth Day 1990. Richard Land was a casualty in the development towards anti-environmentalism within the Christian community. As previously stated, Land once firmly supported mainstream media sources that quoted the scientists who argued that humans were affecting the climate. Now he turned his back on such views. Like Harold Lindsell, Land became a compliant victim in the close alliance between the religious right and free enterprise conservatives.

Although the Faith Commitment did not take on global warming by name, this did not mean that co-signer Jerry Falwell was unsure what stance to take. Since the early 1990s he had concluded that the ozone layer was not being depleted and that global warming was not a consequence of human activity, but despite all of his best efforts, the issues could not be put to rest. He was continuously forced to battle concerns from eco-friendly Christians and others on television programs on which he frequently appeared. Like the Faith Commitment and the Cornwall Declaration, Falwell knew he had to say he loved God's creation, but his main points were that he did not worship the earth and global warming was not a human problem.

In 2000 Falwell appeared on Bill Maher's show *Politically Incorrect*. As he sat next to actress Lynn Redgrave he agreed with another guest, California Congressional Representative Dana Rohrabacher, who said the oil industry had helped American society in various ways and declared that global warming was a myth. Falwell cited the science community in his argument in hopes of gaining credibility, saying that he "had scientists put papers together for me and the majority of the scientists are saying global warming's a myth." Maher waved his arms: "What happens to all the gas emissions? Does that just go to bunny land?" Rohrabacher said that 1% of carbon emissions came from cars and the rest from termites and volcanoes. Maher responded: "Cow farting? Pollution is nothing to worry about?" Falwell corrected him: "no, no, no. Pollution is to be worried about, but I just don't think there is such a thing as global warming."<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Asset ID: 253195, Tape Name: JF on Politically Incorrect, Rec Date: 08-03-2000  
Tape series Talk Shows. Communications Department, Liberty University.

Falwell was perhaps stretching the truth a little on Maher's show (unless documentation was lost). It was not until two years later that Falwell really began using "science" as a way to counter global warming in church services. In his sermon titled "The 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A time of Great Rewards & Great Risks," after reporting the "tragedy" of a Mayor who vowed to fly the rainbow flag, Falwell switched on an overhead projector and addressed global warming stating that "Cybercast News Service" reported "A team of international scientists has found that climate models showing global warming are based on 'a fairy tale of computer projections.'" In a later slide, the audience could see that "17,000 scientists," as Falwell audibly repeated, "true scientists, true scientists...have signed a petition saying that it is inaccurate to assume human activity is 'causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere and disruption of the Earth's climate.'"<sup>349</sup> He combined these "facts" with finances, reminding his congregation that the Kyoto Agreement will economically destroy and break America. "In other words" he said, "this whole thing is anti-capitalism, anti-American, and basically anti-Christian. It's a myth."<sup>350</sup> He reiterated similar views again in a sermon the following month called "Lest We Forget." Global warming however, would not go away for Falwell and he continued to harp on it in church and on television programs, disagreeing with other leaders in the conservative Protestant community.

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<sup>349</sup> Asset ID 280590, Tape name JF The 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Time of Great Rewards & Great Risks, Rec Date: 07-07-2002. Sermon Title: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Time of Great Rewards & Great Risks. Communications Department, Liberty University.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

In 2002 Falwell debated evangelical Ron Sider on the CNN show *Inside Politics*. Since the early 1980s Sider had strongly advocated evangelicals get actively involved to correct social problems and live Christ-like lifestyles – ultimately being examples to the rest of the world of how a Christian can change the world for the better. Two of his many books include *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* and *Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience: Why Are Christians Living Just Like the Rest of the World*. Sider founded Evangelicals for Social Action, which began on a local level in 1973 but expanded to a national organization in 1978.<sup>351</sup> In the early 1990s Sider’s group promoted Christian environmental stewardship along with others like the Evangelical Environmental Network supported by Rev. Jim Ball and the SBC under the direction of Richard Land.<sup>352</sup> The media took notice because, at least among popular thought, evangelicals were not supposed to be so progressively minded. Falwell made sure the audience understood that Sider did not represent the religious right.

The TV show host explained that the Evangelical Environmental Network had launched a campaign promoting the purchasing of eco-friendly cars. The tagline, which

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<sup>351</sup> <http://www.evangelicalsforsocialaction.org/about/history/> (accessed January 26, 2016.).

<sup>352</sup> The Evangelical Environmental Network began in 1993, becoming another eco-friendly active organization like Calvin DeWitt’s Au Sable Institute. DeWitt and other Christian environmentalists pointed to the EEN in their later publications as proof that the conservative Protestant community is becoming environmentally friendly. They were formed in response to those in the conservative Protestant community who were inspired by the 1990 Earth Day observance. This development is described in detail by Fowler and Larsen. Although Richard Land is mentioned here, he later modified his environmental views as demonstrated later in this chapter.

was getting a great deal of attention, ran “What would Jesus drive?”<sup>353</sup> The host asked Falwell if getting into the environmental debate was appropriate for Christians. Falwell replied that Jesus walked everywhere so He never had a view on such philosophical questions. However, Falwell minimized any effort to change one’s lifestyle for environmental reasons, saying that he loves his GMC Suburban. “My wife drives one and I drive one. I have a lot of people piled in with me at all times.” Sider responded by citing the scientific community, who he said advised consumers not to purchase such polluting commodities. Falwell turned his attention from the host to attacking Sider’s environmental and religious argument: “It was global cooling 30 years ago Ron, and it’s global warming now and neither one of us will be here in 100 years to know what it is,,, I don’t believe a moment of it and the whole thing is created to destroy America’s free enterprise system... and our economic stability. I’m so glad that President Bush and 99 of the 100 senators refused to sign the Kyoto Treaty.”<sup>354</sup> Later Sider tried explaining that the best scientists of the day agree that global warming is caused by humans. In response Falwell equated the theory of evolution to global warming, asking Sider if he believed the book of Genesis. Sider ignored Falwell and repeated Genesis 2:15. Falwell then said that he loved the earth too but did not worship it, nor did he observe Earth Day. Sider began talking over Falwell, assuring viewers that he did not worship the earth either but that there are thousands of evangelicals who are orthodox and because of that

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<sup>353</sup> Asset ID: 250127, Tape Name: Inside Politics, Rec Date 11-20-2002, CNN. Communications Department, Liberty University.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

they will watch over the earth. Just before the host ended the debate Falwell advised viewers to, “Go out and buy an SUV today.”<sup>355</sup>

Falwell’s fight in the 2000s against Ball and Sider exemplifies the growing division within the ranks of the conservative Protestant community when it came to the environment. He and others were able to corral people like Land, but the apparent need to save God’s earth was too tempting for others and as the decade wore on, Falwell found the Cornwall Declaration and the Faith Commitment were not enough. Even his old comrade Pat Robertson went back to his environmentally sympathetic self-help type publications. In two of his books, *Right on the Money: Financial Advice for Tough Times* (2009) and *Bring It On: Tough Questions Candid Answers* (2003), Robertson was back to offering brief views of different aspects of life. In the latter he devoted a section to the topic “Nature Stewards or Tree Huggers.” Here he repeated a line from his speech at the 1980 National Affairs Briefing in which he said humanity should take dominion but not abuse the earth.<sup>356</sup> Furthermore, he admitted once more that people have done the latter by “...gashing open mountains, clearing forests, polluting streams and poisoning the air.” He revived his criticisms about past Americans who almost killed off the buffalo and the Florida egret. Nevertheless, Robertson warned that people should not worship the “snail darter” and that obsessing over the environment is “foolishness.” “Wisely using the environment is biblical stewardship.”<sup>357</sup> Additionally, Pat Robertson took time out of his

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>356</sup> Pat Robertson, *Bring It On: Tough Questions. Candid Answers* (Nashville: W. Publishing Group, 2003), 128.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.



schedule to appear in a commercial with the Reverend Al Sharpton sponsored by an organization closely associated with Al Gore. The commercial ran in 2008. With the reverends Pat Robertson and Al Sharpton sitting together on a loveseat oddly placed at the beach, Robertson delivered his lines over the sound of the crashing surf, “Al let’s face it. We’re polar opposites.”

Sharpton agreed. “We couldn’t be further apart. I’m on the left...”

Robertson finished, “and I’m usually on the right, except on one issue.”

“Tell them what that is Reverend Pat.”

Already smiling, Robertson said, “That would be our planet. Taking care of it is extremely important.”

Sharpton added, “We all need to work together, liberals and conservatives.”

“So get involved. It’s the right thing to do.”

Sharpton quipped, “There you go again.”<sup>358</sup>

Robertson laughed and the scene faded as the website address, *wecansolveit.org*, appeared and a voiceover reminded viewers that climate change is a problem, but by people coming together and working for a common cause, solutions could be found. The commercial was not an anomaly or an example of Robertson losing his mind. It illustrated his long-held sympathies for the natural world that had gotten lost in the 1990s.

In 2006 Falwell noted another troubling situation in the conservative Protestant world in regard to global warming. A group of evangelicals, including some who were

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<sup>358</sup> ABC News, “Sharpton Goes Green.” ABC News Video Web site, 0:30, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/video?id=5193758> (Accessed 4 Aug 2014).

sympathetic with the religious right, signed a resolution titled The Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI). It represented the growing interest among the mainstream of the conservative Protestant community who acknowledged in their first “claim” that “Human-Induced Climate Change is Real.”<sup>359</sup> “As evangelicals we have hesitated to speak on this issue until we could be more certain of the science of climate change, but the signatories now believe that the evidence demands action.”<sup>360</sup> They applauded individual companies for voluntarily taking steps in reducing carbon emissions but also called on the government to act: “In the United States, the most important immediate step that can be taken at the federal level is to pass and implement national legislation requiring sufficient economy-wide reductions in carbon dioxide emissions through cost-effective, market-based mechanisms such as a cap-and-trade program.” Falwell could stomach evangelical “liberals” like Ron Sider trying to save the environment. He even made fun of him in church services. But now people Falwell respected were siding with human-caused global warming and he was forced to take a more serious stand.

Worries that the outside world would think he agreed with those who signed the ECI perhaps heightened Falwell’s hatred for environmentalists. His apprehension was not unmerited. Later the same year, the President of the Union for Reform Judaism, Rabbi Eric Jaffie, came to speak at Liberty University’s convocation on April 26, 2006 – a few days after the secular Earth Day observance and a few months after the drafting of the ECI. Jaffie praised what he thought Falwell and the students supported: “And now

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<sup>359</sup> <http://www.npr.org/documents/2006/feb/evangelical/calltoaction.pdf> (accessed January 26, 2016.).

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

you're turning your attention to world poverty, debt relief and global warming. In these battles we are your allies. I hope we can strengthen and expand that alliance.” Afterwards, Falwell thanked him and let his audience know that what Jaffie said was not along LU's beliefs. Falwell reminded the audience that he had spoken at many synagogues and “Nobody ever booed me in a synagogue when I said things totally opposite of what they believe.” Jaffie sat there smiling, probably wondering what he had said that was against the beliefs of the fundamentalist/religious right audience.<sup>361</sup>

One of the first places Falwell looked to vent his frustration with the ECI was *Falwell Confidential*, his “private” newsletter sent to his most ardent supporters. During the 1990s it was sent via fax machine but in the 2000s he switched over to email. *Falwell Confidential* was somewhat similar to *Pat Robertson's Perspectives*. It consisted of his musings about the world and gave him another platform to rage about liberals or praise conservative heroes like Sean Hannity or Ronald Reagan. No one was safe in *Falwell Confidential*. In May of 2003 he complained about animal right activists and political correctness: “Maybe we should appease the unyielding animal-rights activists and not depict any meat dishes at all [in reference to school textbooks]. Or maybe we should suggest in our textbooks that meat eaters are murderers.” He then wrote that perhaps Americans should blow up Mt. Rushmore because “We shouldn't have a monument that

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<sup>361</sup> Asset ID: 256578, Tape No. FB-LCH-261, Tape Name: JF “Ten Steps in Developing Your Faith”, Rec Date: 04-26-2006, Tape Series: LU Chapel/Convocation. Communications Department, Liberty University.

doesn't have a minority, a homosexual, a dolphin or a handicapped individual.”<sup>362</sup> He ended with, “I think I'll head over to McDonalds in my SUV.”<sup>363</sup>

When Falwell found out about the ECI, he expressed his disappointment, writing, “Many of the people who signed this document are my friends --- some are dear friends. Nevertheless, I have felt compelled to oppose their efforts because I believe that global warming is an unproven phenomenon and may actually just be junk science being passed off as fact.”<sup>364</sup> He then utilized a variety of arguments he could offer in brief terms. Falwell first reminded readers that, in the 1970s, some scientists thought the world was cooling. Another argument was that other countries refuse to cut down on fuel emissions, hinting that a reduction in energy will weaken the United States. He hypocritically wrote, “Alan Wisdom, president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy says that churches should be reluctant to attach political agendas to things that lack a clear and scriptural mandate and consensus among the faithful. These are very wise words.” However, in this newsletter, Falwell actually suggested government regulation on emissions: “At most, I recommend asking the U.S. government to take reasonable measures to establish limits on emission at the federal level and to pass and implement national legislation requiring sufficient economy-wide reductions in carbon dioxide emissions through cost effective, market-based mechanisms. I stop right there... for fear of it snowballing for

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<sup>362</sup> Jerry Falwell, “Let's Just Ban... Everything. Falwell Confidential, May 1, 2003. FAL 2-1, Series 2, Folder 5, Falwell Confidential: 2003. LUA.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Jerry Falwell, “Climate Initiative is a Bad Idea, Falwell Confidential, February 10, 2006. FAL 2-1, Series 2, Folder 9, Falwell Confidential: 2006. LUA.

fear of injuring future generations and diminish our nation.”<sup>365</sup> This concession was the closest he ever came to suggesting that CO<sup>2</sup> may need regulation and he never expressed the thoughts again.

By November 2006 Falwell acknowledged climate change was a divisive issue among his religious community: “There is a developing cultural divide occurring within the evangelical community over an unlikely subject: global warming.” He specifically noted the ECI and went on the offensive, accusing the resolution of having been initiated by Al Gore and declaring it was linked with “abortion-on-demand and population control organizations that are touting global warming as genuine science.”<sup>366</sup> He reported the conservative think tank, The Interfaith Stewardship (IS), was gathering a group of scholars and pastors who believe evangelicals should be wary of the politicization and bad science of global warming alarmism. Such resolutions, he wrote, would hurt the economy.<sup>367</sup>

Finally, by February 21, 2007, Falwell was fed up with the whole situation and decided to dedicate an entire sermon to climate change. In an email to church members and his television audience, he drummed up interest: “Spend Sunday Morning and

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<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Jerry Falwell, “Evangelicals and Global Warming,” Falwell Confidential, November 17, 2006. FAL 2-1, Series 2, Folder 9, Falwell Confidential: 2006. LUA.. Falwell cited conservative think tanks: “The ECI’s decision to join the global warming wars compelled two conservative evangelical think tanks – the Institute on Religion & Democracy and the Action Institute for the Study of Religion & Liberty – to suggest the ECI had been ‘exploited’ by the abortion-rights community. They note that this strange union could actually ‘give anti-Christian ideologies unmerited moral and theological cover.’”

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

Evening, February 25, at Thomas Road Baptist Church. 11:00 a.m. – Pastor Jerry Falwell will confront one of the World’s most controversial issues in his message entitled: THE MYTH OF GLOBAL WARMING \* Is there incontrovertible scientific evidence of global warming? \* Will the curbing of greenhouse emission affect the global climate? \*Do Christians have a moral responsibility to commit time and resources to the so-called “green evangelical movement?” \* Should America submit to the international Kyoto Protocol even though China, India, and most of the third world have refused to do so?” The answers to such questions were clear in the next paragraph: “Pastor Falwell will expose, from a Biblical perspective, this international global warming fraud.”<sup>368</sup>

Falwell continued to promote his upcoming sermons in subsequent emails explaining why he, who was not a scientist, would be taking on such an unusual topic. He wrote, “some members of the evangelical community have recently aligned themselves with radical voices within the global warming movement. I see this as unnecessary and, worse, dangerous.”<sup>369</sup> “Never mind that in November, for the second consecutive month, temperatures across the continental U.S. were cooler-than-average, according to scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Data Center.”<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> Jerry Falwell, Spend Sunday at Thomas Road Baptist Church, email, February 21, 2007. FAL2-1 Series 2, Folder 10, Falwell Confidential: January – May – 2007. LUA.

<sup>369</sup> Jerry Falwell, Preaching Out Against ‘Global Warming’ Panic, Falwell Confidential, February 23, 2007. FAL2-1 Series 2, Folder 10, Falwell Confidential: January – May – 2007. LUA.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., 2.

In February of 2007 Falwell filmed promotional shorts for his “Myth of Global Warming” sermon. “Today’s message may be the most important one I’ve delivered this year. I’m speaking on the myth of global warming...I mean it really has become a hysteria it has become an alarmist state today.”<sup>371</sup> A few days later on the 25<sup>th</sup> he delivered his message. Instead of only citing what “true scientists” say, Falwell used the Bible to back up his argument. He first quoted Psalm 24:1-2 which states that the earth is the Lord’s. He then recited Genesis 8:22 to assure his congregation and television audience that global warming speculations suggesting that humans are upsetting natural temperature changes could never happen because God promises, “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.” He acknowledged that temperatures fluctuate, but such things are only cyclical and only 30 years ago scientists were warning of lowering temperatures. “This

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<sup>371</sup> Asset ID: 262654, Tape No: FB-LFL-FF0029.mo, Tape Name: LFL opens: Jerry Falwell Standups, Tape Series: Live from Liberty Footage, Rec Date: 02-15-2007. Communications Department, Liberty University.

“Today’s message may be the most important one I’ve delivered this year. I’m speaking on the myth of global warming. Nothing anchors the left, the liberals like dealing with an issue that they have married and made cardinal doctrine, for example, they hate George Bush, they hate the Iraqi War, they are pro-abortion, they believe in gay marriage [camera tightening up on him], and they believe that global warming is cardinal truth, absolute and we should all be frightened over the rising of the ocean levels that will sweep coastal areas and islands away all the, and all the seasons will be lost, I mean it really has become a hysteria it has become an alarmist state today. I’m going to tell you why you need not fear global warming. As a matter of fact, I’m going to prove to you that global warming as it is being presented to us today does not exist. Now there is no question that the temperatures are rising...” but this is cyclical. He says he’ll get more hate mail on this than anything he’s preach on in a long time and asserts that we’re being duped by people who want to ruin America. He continues promoting the sale of the message “The Myth of Global Warming” for Sunday school classes and warns we mustn’t allow Christian to fall into the ECI – don’t be duped. “Leave the Earth to God.”

goes back further than when Al Gore invented the internet [laughter].” Falwell blamed the hysteria on the U.N., liberal politicians, radical environmentalists, liberal clergymen, Hollywood, and pseudo scientists. He uploaded a site on the church’s webpage called “A Skeptics Guide Debunking Global Warming.” He promised it would be updated on a regular basis. Falwell went on to say that “Some good evangelical men, some who preached right here at this pulpit and friends of mine had joined the ECI. And they put their name on a document along with the people who are left of everything.” He had asked them why they are doing this. They responded that they must uphold the biblical mandate to keep prudent domination of the earth. Falwell agreed with this to a point. “We oughtta keep the streams clean. I love the mountains best. Others love the coast better. But-ah we should certainly work – this is my father’s world. We should work to keep it clean, healthy and reseed the forest and all the things that go along with responsible citizenship, but we shouldn’t be hugging trees and worshiping the creation more than we worship the creator [camera breaks to a man nodding in agreement and saying “amen”]. And that is what global warming’s all about.” He went on to say that last year 60 prominent “real scientists say there are problems with global warming. We should be environmentalists but not like Al Gore and tree huggers. We need to get back to preaching the gospel.”<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Asset ID: 255421, Tape No: FB-CMS-0791.mov, Tape name: JF “The Myth of Global Warming”, Rec Date 02-25-2007, Tape Series Messages at TRBC – Sunday Morning at TRBC, “The Myth of Global Warming” Communications Department, Liberty University.



Three months later Jerry Falwell died in his office at Liberty University. He once told his supporters: “When I breathe my last breath, I will have a smile on my face for two reasons: 1. I will know that I will awaken in the presence of my Savior. 2. I will be confident that I will have left a legion of Liberty alumni who will collectively take up the mantle, carried by Senator Helms, myself and many others of my generation, to defend biblical values in our one nation, under God and I hope they give the liberal politicians and the ACLU more trouble than I ever did.”<sup>373</sup>

Falwell indeed left legions to carry on his work, including his anti-environmental views. Until 2011, on his church’s website, Falwell accused the environmental movement of attempting “(1) To Create Major Economic Damage to America. (2) The Desire To Change the Subject Concerning the World’s Moral Bankruptcy [and] (3) Most importantly, it is Satan’s Attempt to Re-direct the Church’s Primary Focus.”<sup>374</sup> The list was taken down in 2011, and why is unclear. It is doubtful that there was any change in the church’s environmental views. Perhaps it was too controversial for his son, Johnathan Falwell, who took over as pastor of TRBC. Jonathan continued sending out *Falwell Confidential* but does not seem the dogmatic, politically-charged general of the religious right like his father. He steps into the political realm when it comes to more secure topics like abortion, but often presents his arguments in compassionate terms rather than raging sarcasm and disbelief. Jerry Falwell’s other son, Jerry Junior assumed

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<sup>373</sup> Jerry Falwell, “Jesse Helms Comes to Liberty in Falwell Confidential, Oct. 7, 2004, FAL 2-1, Series 2, Folder 6, Falwell Confidential 2004. LUA.

<sup>374</sup> [http://trbc.org/new/sermons.php?url=20070225\\_11AM.html](http://trbc.org/new/sermons.php?url=20070225_11AM.html) (accessed January 20, 2011).

the role of Chancellor of LU. Unlike his more rigid brother, Jerry Jr. portrays himself as a cool and relaxed kind of guy, who addresses the LU community with a swagger and cocky demeanor.

In 2010 Jerry Jr. and LU's director of Communication appeared on Fox's *Glenn Beck Show*. Beck had his chalkboard out with a list of terms. In descending order it read, "God, morals, global warming, environmental justice, socialism, R/W (redistribution of wealth), and Marxism."<sup>375</sup> Beck told his audience that instead of pushing for communism, the Marxists found a backdoor to their goals by using social justice and environmentalism, which sound good, but are not worth the price and not found in the Bible. Jerry Jr. additionally stated that such things should not be addressed by the government but only by voluntary charity.<sup>376</sup> Later that year, Jerry Jr. invited climate change denier Lord Christopher Monckton to address Liberty University and explain the science behind why humans are not causing global warming.<sup>377</sup>

Jerry Jr. introduced Monckton and applause followed when it was noted that Al Gore refused to debate the guest speaker. Monckton greeted the crowd and asked them to return his salutation by addressing him as "my Lord." The response was not good enough and the audience was asked to repeat the title louder, which they did begrudgingly. The awkward beginning quickly dissipated as Monckton delved into an

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<sup>375</sup> Asset ID: 344696, Tape Name: JF JR on Glenn Beck, Record Date 05-18-2010. Communications Department, Liberty University.

<sup>376</sup> JF JR on Glenn Beck. Communications Department, Liberty University.

<sup>377</sup> Asset ID: 347139, 03-10-2010, Convo, Lord Christopher Monckton. Communications Department, Liberty University.

argument explaining why anthropogenic global warming was a host of lies with dire consequences.

Monckton delivered a well-rehearsed presentation, backed up with numerous statistics communicated in a public-friendly format and generously buttressed with comedy. The crowd laughed and applauded in response to the description that Gore's *Inconvenient Truth* was a "horror comedy." Monckton also took on the disturbing popular perception that because of higher temperatures melting arctic ice, polar bears were drowning. Not to worry, he comforted, such things were simply not true. "Just four were found dead because of a storm... because as we scientists say, 'shit happens.'"<sup>378</sup> The auditorium erupted in a fit of laughter followed by thunderous applause. The response lasted half a minute before the presentation could continue. Chancellor Jerry Jr. laughed and smiled well after the laughter subsided.

Beyond simple denial, Monckton offered a variety of other reasons why efforts to stem climate change were a fool's errand. He discredited warnings regarding increased levels of CO<sup>2</sup>, repeating old arguments from the early 1990s: more of the gas is good for plants. He continued saying that people in Haiti before the earthquake were forced to eat "mud pies" because the governments of the world decided that humans must use bio-fuels, thus diverting a resource that could alleviate the suffering of the poor. As a result of this choice, "millions end up dead."<sup>379</sup> He also asked that if China refuses to cut down its emissions, why should the U.S? Near the end of the talk, he concluded that

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid.

although the U.N. tries to get nations to cut back on energy, they are powerless. “And I hope it stays that way.” Applause followed.<sup>380</sup>

When it comes to the environment, the conservative Protestant world, as Falwell pointed out years ago, is divided but one side seems to be winning. Jerry Jr. refuses to admit global warming is real, as did his father, but in the recent past LU jumped wholeheartedly into campus recycling. Ridiculing environmentalists, however, continues at Thomas Road Baptist Church. In 2011, for example, longtime religious right supporter Elmer Towns told a TRBC audience that he wished for the Northeast to get hit by as much snow as possible because that is where people live who believe in global warming (although he later recanted, saying that he only wanted Al Gore to get hit). Another TRBC speaker by the name of Dr. Ergun Canter disparaged worries over the subject in 2008. Canter was upset that other Christians spoke to him privately about concern for climate change. He told the congregation that such worries were unnecessary because the problem is insignificant, as is concern for animal rights.<sup>381</sup> His approach to the environment, like Falwell’s, was couched in humor, scoffing at the topic and saying he cares about animals too – especially at meal times.

Like TRBC, A Beka Books argues the same anti-environmental points as they have promoted since the early 1990s. Bob Jones University Press, on the other hand, always advocated that readers should care for nature and presented these sentiments in a

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

<sup>381</sup> Asset ID: 255505, Tape Number FB-CMS-0935, Tape Name: Dr. Ergun Caner: Scratch & Sniff Spirituality: “The Old Lies of the New Age,” Rec Date: 07-06-2008 Messages at TRBC – Sunday Morning at TRBC. Communications Department, Liberty University.

compassionate manner. Recently however, it seems the publisher is promoting that Christians approach current issues such as global warming in a “wait, see and study” attitude. In other words, the jury is still out, and in the meantime capitalism should continue but “wisely” use resources— although what “wise” means is never defined. The Bob Jones University’s 2012 *Earth Science* textbook describes the science community as very divided on a host of environmental issues, writing “some scientists say” that global warming may be helpful, while “other scientists say” that humans may be causing climate change through pollution. The authors mostly leave the decision up to the reader, but in a leading way. First they offer three choices citizens could take towards the problem. “If global warming is happening, we have three choices. We could do nothing and assume that we can handle problems if they develop. Or we could immediately try to change features of the earth’s systems in ways that might have major unintended impacts on global weather, air pollution, and our ability to grow food. Or we could attempt to refine our understanding of the problem and take appropriate actions.” Taking action that might lead to “major unintended impacts” seems scary. The authors reasoned, “Which is more likely to succeed: predicting and responding to problems like rising sea levels, or attempting untested ways to control global climate?”<sup>382</sup> Responding to problems piecemeal sounds much more reasonable.

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<sup>382</sup> Roy H. Williams, *Earth Science: New Methods and Studies* (Toronto, Canada: Apple Academic Press, 2012), 520.

In 2007 the Southern Baptist Convention confronted anthropogenic global warming in the same style as the Bob Jones University 2012 textbook. In response to the ECI, Richard Land and other leaders of the SBC met and drafted a resolution titled “On Global Warming.”<sup>383</sup> In this document they admitted that global warming was happening but decided that the scientific community was too divided on the subject, the UN had changed its mind about the issue in the past, and the consequences of immediate action would be detrimental to the economy and also to the poor.<sup>384</sup>

Several years later Benjamin Philips, an assistant professor of systematic theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Houston, wrote an article on the SBC Ethics & Liberty Commission website about the developments between the Evangelical Environmental Network and the Southern Baptist Convention. He divided the fight over the issue of global warming into two sections, the first that occurred in the 1990s, and the second from 2000 to the present (2009). The 1990s, he argued, were dominated by eco-friendly evangelicals such as the EEN, whereas in 2000, a backlash of skeptical Christians fought back with the Cornwall Alliance. Philips agreed with the balanced view of the skeptics and concluded that consensus does not mean fact, noting that other global-warming-denying resolutions like the “Call to Truth” was signed by 19,700 qualified scientists among whom were specialists in evaluating the effects of CO<sup>2</sup>. This statement the author paired with “The Oregon Petition” which had been

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<sup>383</sup> Benjamin Philips, 1372 ERLC “Getting Into Hot Water: Evangelicals and Global Warming” By Benjamin Phillips, Feb 3, 2009. SBHLA.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

signed by 31,000 “qualified scientists” by the time of the article’s publication, along with another document known as the “Manhattan Declaration.”<sup>385</sup>

Other publications regarding climate change written and commented on by the SBC reflect the fact that the issue remains controversial in the community. A number of online articles include titles such as “The ‘Cap-and-Tax’ Fiasco” by Doug Carlson, who argued that manmade global warming is increasingly viewed with skepticism among scientists. Readers shared their views in the comment section complaining about those who wanted to implement regulations and adding sarcastic remarks, for example, “We all emit carbon dioxide when we breathe. Let’s stop breathing!”<sup>386</sup>

In 2009 Carlson wrote another article for the SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission titled “The Climate Change Push: From Capitol Hill to Copenhagen.” He cited the Heritage Foundation, which warned that the average family could expect to see their energy prices soar an additional 1,870 by 2020 while the populations of polar bears are growing. One article commenter was pleased to see that Richard Land had backed off his support for global warming. Another commenter named Jennifer expressed embarrassment after watching a film released by the SBC, which suggested a warmer climate is beneficial. This information, she wrote, went against everything she had learned in college. Commenter Kenton Hunt responded writing that he was not surprised Jennifer had received the pro-global warming argument in college: “There are tens of thousands of scientists who dissent from the UN IPCC report. Google the ‘senate

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<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> Doug Carlson, 1294 erlc.com, “The ‘Cap-and-Tax’ Fiasco” by Doug Carlson July 1, 2009. SBHLA.

minority report on global warming’ to read statements from about 700 real scientists who are convinced this whole global warming thing is a hoax.”<sup>387</sup> Other commenters advised readers not to be duped by fake science and “if greenhouse gasses are getting out of control why aren’t the plants exploding out of the ground? I see no evidence of that happening.”<sup>388</sup>

## Conclusion

The intensive publicity surrounding Earth Day 1990 did not spur the religious right to universally respond with hatred for the environmental movement. The catalyst for their present-day anti-environmental position was the interest that bubbled up within their own ranks. During the first three years of the decade, individual churches held Earth Day sermons, students at Falwell’s Liberty University participated in the observance and, most notably, conservative Dr. Richard Land made nature protection a top priority in the CLC of the SBC. At the same time, however, free enterprise conservatives increased their concern for looming environmental regulations they predicted would come from Earth Day as well as the 1992 Earth Rio Summit, and struck back in force. In the attempt at halting sweeping eco-friendly reforms, they brought

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<sup>387</sup> Kenton Hunt in the Comment Section of Doug Carlson, “The Climate Push: From Capitol Hill to Copenhagen, *The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission*, Oct 6, 2009. Ar 140, 8.17, Folder: Environment, 2005-2012.

<sup>388</sup> Theron in the Comment Section of Doug Carlson, “The Climate Push: From Capitol Hill to Copenhagen, *The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission*, Oct 6, 2009. Ar 140, 8.17, Folder: Environment, 2005-2012.



their long-time religious allies into agreement, but this was not an easy task; the religious right leadership in tandem with free enterprise allies had to win support and overturn eco-friendly Christian views by using the tools of credentialed experts and bullying.

Pat Robertson was one of the first within the religious right leadership to align with economic conservative anti-environmental views. During his 1988 presidential campaign, he held them at arm's length but was nevertheless swayed enough not to adopt a strong pro-environmental position. After forming the Christian Coalition, with help from a politically conservative advocate, Robertson published several books that blamed environmentalists for developing a conspiracy that would ruin American economics and Christianity – a belief very similar to Constance Cumbey's conclusions in her 1984 book *Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow*. However, the mainstream of the religious right was not swayed to any degree in 1984 and were very unlikely convinced by the conspiracy theory in the 1990s. The CLC's fundamentalist Dr. Richard Land, for example, saw no reason not to embrace an eco-friendly Christian response and urged others to protect the environment through 1992. However, other voices of reason, most particularly credentialed scientists like Dixy Lee Ray, offered an alternative approach to major issues including climate change, pesticide use, and acid rain. The eco-friendly resolve of conservative Protestants subsequently crumbled. By 1993 A Beka Books drastically changed their science textbooks to crush what their young Christian students heard in the everyday world and put environmental concerns to rest. They constructed anti-environmental argument with "facts" and cited Ray by name.

Along with a scientific alternative, bullying became a favorite tactic to loosen the grip of any stragglers who kept a compassionate grip on the belief that Christians must preserve God's earth. Articles and political cartoons in Regent University's newspaper equated compassion for the earth with all other liberal issues, and accused environmentalists of being Chicken Littles. Falwell proved one of the loudest voices among the religious right leadership to strengthen anti-environmental views as a platform within his community. At first, he did not know what to do when his Liberty Biology Club tried to take part in the 1990 Earth Day observance. He then argued against environmentalists from the conspiracy theory standpoint and slowly incorporated "scientific" data while all the while using humiliation as the primary tool of persuasion. The bullying strategy should not be underestimated.

On December 1, 1996 Falwell spoke about the five points of Christianity and, as expected, he slipped into current affairs. Sitting behind Falwell was Doug Oldham, who eight years previously had wondered if global warming was real. Oldham knew by this time it was a product of environmentalists and he was about to get another affirmation on the topic. Falwell spoke with an air of disbelief: "They believe the trees are god. The tree huggers you know and the environmentalists. Earth day [an older couple laughed] I don't observe earth day because the new agers celebrate Earth Day and I love the earth. And if one of you guys as a Christian want to start another Earth Day and say this is for the Christians I'll - I'll go ahead and kiss a tree or rub the ground or something. [laughter]." By this point, Falwell was quite fed up with the ridiculousness of the topic and started stressing the "aaay" in Earth Day. "But I'm not going to observe

Earth Daaaay that the new agers have in place because that's their day and they're on the other side. They are not with Christ. I don't observe Earth Daaay. I do recycle but I do it after dark so they won't know I'm doing it. [big laughter and applause]"<sup>389</sup>

It is not hard to imagine the response by those in the Biology Club if they were in attendance on Dec 1, 1996. As they looked around at their chuckling church family deriding environmentalists, they would undoubtedly be reluctant to express the desire to observe Earth Day again, even if it was designed for Christians as Falwell suggested. But indeed, the Biology Club members were in tune with their fundamentalist faith. They knew that the earth was created by God and even Falwell knew that as Christian stewards they had a responsibility for its upkeep. Although Robertson, Falwell, and A Beka Books tried to stifle eco-friendly action, they could never state that God's creation did not matter. This latter point is what probably upset Falwell the most and gave ammunition to environmental-friendly Christians. From 1990 until his death in 2007, his argument against environmentalists increased in strength and desperation. Efforts to believe in anthropogenic global warming, for example, could not be snuffed out altogether. Fellow leaders like Dr. Richard Land of the CLC could be turned, but to Falwell's chagrin, some of his friends went on to sign the ECI, which led others in the outside world to think that Falwell and the religious right embraced efforts to save the environment, as reflected by guest speaker Rabbi Eric Jaffie. Falwell could not abide

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<sup>389</sup> Asset ID: 254242Tape No: FB-CMS-0146.movTape Name: JF Where The Battle RagesTape Series: Messages at TRBC – Sunday Morning at TRBC Rec Date: 12-01-1996. Communications Department, Liberty University.

such thoughts. Everyone in his world had to be on the same page and uniformly agree on issues. Liberty University with its giant LU monogram that looms over the city of Lynchburg on Chandler's Mountain would stand against the liberal anti-capitalistic pro-environmental cause, and if Falwell could not win his people over through a possible conspiracy theory or even scientific facts – he would get the job done by public humiliation.

Although anti-environmentalist views are salient among the religious right today, this should not be understood as the product of a stereotypical anti-modernist militant reaction against the reenergized environmental movement after Earth Day 1990. Instead, it was the result of a hard-fought battle among those like Falwell who saw his own religious right community embracing eco-friendly positions. Falwell's love and trust in industry and money was an obvious variable in shaping his environmental rhetoric throughout the 1990s and particularly in his "Faith Based Commitment to the Environment" in 2000 when he, along with others, dismissed any concern towards anthropogenic global warming and used the ALAR scare as a case in point to show environmentalists were not only hysterical reactionaries but, at their root, hurt society and what America stood for. Information from A Beka Books and, in 2012, Bob Jones University Press echoed the same industry-friendly feelings. Today industry indeed has a friend in the religious right, who are welcome allies in their quest to keep a healthy bottom line.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

Just prior to and directly after Earth Day 1970, conservative Protestants discussed the issue of ecology with an interest in forming a parallel movement defined by the term “stewardship.” A variety of moderate and conservative religious leaders promoted this approach, including a host of authors from *Christianity Today*, *Moody Monthly* and *Eternity*. During Billy Graham’s radio show, *Hour of Decision*, Leighton Ford delivered an eco-friendly sermon steeped in “born again” rhetoric. Others in agreement included fundamentalist elites Harold Lindsell<sup>390</sup> and Francis Schaeffer, two trusted figures among the subgroup of conservative Protestants who later developed or supported the conservative movement of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the religious right. The Earth Day excitement however, did not last long.

There were two major reasons why interest towards Christian environmental stewardship fizzled out soon after Earth Day 1970. The first was a consequence of the secular environmental movement. Those leading the cause encouraged what they considered more “earth friendly”/new age religions and actually blamed Christianity for the poor state of the environment. This situation pushed the willing conservative Protestant away, a schism that never healed and dogged future attempts by the few who advised fellow believers that God wanted them to protect the natural world. Secondly,

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<sup>390</sup> Lindsell truly believed in compassionate environmental stewardship, but was extremely cautious of the popular environmental movement because of concerns about “earth worship.”

conservative Protestants became preoccupied with other contemporary issues, most notably the ERA, abortion, and gay rights. Despite the diversion, conservative Protestants on the whole did not dismiss or turn against Christian environmental stewardship throughout the 1970s and 1980s. They simply elected to keep it in the background. Additionally, the community developed other ways to understand the natural world beyond the aims of preserving God's earth.

One approach is somewhat abstract and deals with how conservative Protestants, especially those who became politically motivated, understood humanity's proper place in God's creation. To fight the women's and gay rights movements, religious leaders framed opposition in terms of what is natural versus the unnatural; they believed God created humans to act out fixed roles, which should not be deviated from. Falwell, for example, repeatedly cited the Genesis creation story to support heterosexual marriage and extended it to include traditional nineteenth-century gender spheres. In other words, feminism and gay rights were, according to this religious community, unnatural deviations from God's original formula. Furthermore, it was believed God could communicate His evaluations of human actions through earthly signs. The natural world, for instance, could be used by God as a tool to punish the perversions of people who took God's creating process away through abortion or ignoring separate gender spheres, as in women choosing careers over the home. In the mindset of those who later made up the religious right, the health of the family, church and nation all depended on humanity functioning within its proper roles as originally created by God.

Another way conservative Protestants understood the natural world could be witnessed within Christian education material bought and utilized in the ever-increasing number of Christian and homeschools established throughout the 1970s. The first priority for these institutions was the production of educational information written for Christians by Christians. Their first order of business, especially when it came to writing history textbooks, involved developing an understanding of what America should be, a nationalist ideology they envisioned the next generation would embrace as adults. As voting citizens, they would fight for a “correct” understanding of the American family and take the nation back from the unnatural aspirations of liberals pushing progressive social agendas.

Christian American nationalism was centered in the historic relationship between God and the “traditional” family. They credited this partnership as being the major constituent that built America. To legitimize such views, the authors of the educational material cited handpicked episodes from early American history. The Pilgrims, for example, were praised as the founders of what became the United States. Within this narrative the physical environment played a vital role. The authors frequently connected primitive lifestyles and early settler struggles with wilderness, a blueprint thought to keep people strong, God-fearing, and well within their natural gender roles. This frequently touted ‘proper’ lifestyle offered a feel-good imagined past, one which suggested that the nation might one day return to its more wholesome roots rather than being led to ruin by the artificial modern-day alternatives. This interpretation led thousands of students to the doors of “safe” Christian K-12 schools and to the college

campuses of Bob Jones, Pensacola Christian, Regent, and Liberty universities in the 1970s and beyond. Furthermore, American Christian nationalism was a prime ingredient behind the development of the religious right in 1979.

Beginning in the 1980s the Christian American national narrative evolved. With the increasing number of Christian schools, particularly new high schools, more educational material was needed and the concept of free enterprise as a strong element in American identity began percolating throughout the community. This development occurred in tandem with a courtship of right-wing free enterprise conservatives, most notably Paul Weyrich and Richard Viguerie in 1979. Such a relationship was not unexpected. Conservative Protestants had strongly rejected communism in previous decades, but they found themselves struggling with a formidable foe: materialism and wealth. This conflict stemmed from national pressure connected to the 1970s energy crisis. Beginning in 1973 Christians in the SBC as well as individual churches like Jerry Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church, worked to limit energy expenditures. Although they equated wastefulness with unbridled greed, they fully embraced capitalism, especially beginning in the 1980s, and began the process of abandoning the once-praised virtue of simple and humble living.

Although free enterprise accrued in importance, those in the religious right did not incorporate anti-environmentalism as a value. Falwell stayed mostly silent on the issue of the ecological crisis, while Robertson voluntarily and always in a sympathetic tone, brought up the need for Christian environmental stewardship. He did this most notably at the politically charged National Affairs Briefing in Dallas, Texas in 1980,



where he spoke in front of his religious right peers and GOP candidate Ronald Reagan. He continued with these views throughout the 1980s, highlighted by his presidential campaign, and at the Republican National Convention in 1988. This latter appearance was well after Reagan proved in rhetoric and actions that he couldn't care less about environmental protection and instead wanted economic prosperity.

During his Presidency, Reagan set his Secretary of the Interior James Watt to support a healthier economy at the expense of nature if necessary. Watt understood stewardship to mean that nature was a resource for humanity. In the 1980s, Robertson never expressed similar thoughts nor did he come to the aid of Watt who was under continuous attack by environmental groups. Even Falwell, who spoke out in favor of the beleaguered Secretary of the Interior, did not to any real extent support Watt's understanding of the natural world. If the religious right had emphatically chosen free enterprise over the environment, they most likely would have flocked to support Watt and criticize Robertson for his eco-friendly views.

Running parallel to these developments, compassionate Christian environmental stewardship appeared in Christian educational material throughout the 1980s. Bob Jones University maintained sympathetic portrayals of God's world and at the very least promoted a balanced understanding of environmental issues. When it came to pesticides for instance, no direct stand was taken but the dangers and benefits were stated with simply a cautionary note to readers not to become environmental extremists. More often than not, Bob Jones agreed with contemporary environmental concerns about contaminated water, acid rain, deforestation, and endangered species. A Beka Books

stood farther back from the debate, but in 1989 released an economics textbook taking a strong stand for a sustainable and safe environment. This book portrayed the health of the environment as being just as important as economic stability.

Amongst these larger developments, traces of anti-environmentalism emerged during the 1980s elsewhere in the conservative Protestant community. The most prominent example is fundamentalist Harold Lindsell, who as late as 1976 had promoted energy conservation and went out of his way as editor of *Christianity Today* to secure an interview with Williams College professor Dr. Carl Reidel, an advocate of compassionate Christian environmental stewardship. A few years later however, Lindsell accepted the arguments offered by politically charged conservative reading material that accused the environmental movement of hindering American business and moving the nation towards socialism and regulation. Such views helped Lindsell develop the premise for his 1982 book *Free Enterprise: A Judeo-Christian Defense*, in which he stated it was the right of Americans to use resources however they wished. Other lesser figures in the community shared similar feelings and spun conspiracy theories blaming environmentalists for trying to convert Christians to New Age faiths. Nevertheless, anti-environmentalism did not break into the mainstream rhetoric of the religious right until the 1990s. And even then such views followed in the wake of a growing number of credentialed scientists who, with the benefit of the media, refuted environmental concerns. Religious right leaders, as highlighted by the example of Falwell, now had a politically conservative environmental argument legitimized by experts.

In short, although the push to spark a compassionate Christian environmental stewardship movement after Earth Day 1970 died down, the topic within the community did not disappear nor was it rejected. Instead it remained in the background and continued as the accepted understanding within the mainstream world of conservative Protestants, including those in the religious right. In 1990 all this changed. Conservative free enterprise groups made refuting the environmental issues of the day such as anthropogenic global warming and ozone depletion a top priority, and as a consequence, anti-environmental messages crept into the rhetoric of the religious right. This development was a product of getting credentialed scientists and the media involved. Both Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson attached themselves to these anti-environmental views and numerous other examples appeared within conservative Protestant culture. These religious right leaders followed their free enterprise allies into anti-environmentalism along with the wider American populace who refused to make major environmental policy changes at the national and international level. Their anti-environmental beliefs were the outcome of a battle on the national stage, which could also be observed raging within the religious community itself, fought between eco-friendly Christians and anti-environmentalists from the 1990s to the present. Among the religious right today however, one side seems to be winning, or at least to be dominant, but this perception only exists because economically conservative Protestants like Falwell kept increasing the volume of their anti-environmental rhetoric. Falwell's anti-environmental argument hit a climax in 2007, a few months before his death. By this time, hatred for environmentalists among the religious right was at a healthy level

although others in the community had come together to sign the ECI just months before. The religious right may largely be climate change deniers today, but the road they took to this end was long and not because they are stereotypically predisposed to be militant reactionaries and Bible literalists. Like many people, secular or religious, they chose conclusions based on a variety of reasons.

The movement to disprove human-caused global warming is well documented and described by NYU professor Dale Jamieson in his recent book *Reason in a Dark Time* (2014). He argues that scientific ignorance plays a large part in helping the public willingly become skeptical towards anthropogenic climate change, and to a certain extent he links such beliefs to the type of people who believe in conspiracies such as the faking of the moon landing.<sup>391</sup> Jamieson concludes that because of this ignorance, people give heightened respect to scientists and expect them to be infallible. This understanding puts those in the discipline at high risk to fail if any errors are found in their work or if fellow experts express disagreement. Jamieson also seems disturbed with the fact that the majority of the American populace refuses to accept that humans

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<sup>391</sup> Jamieson spends a great deal of time trying to show how climate change deniers get their traction. He describes it as backroom dealings, which is true, but he ignores that people who refuse to believe that humans cause climate change are simply given a viewpoint to believe by what appear to be real scientists. The majority of conservative Protestants did not scour scientific magazines and did not base their reality on conspiracy theories. They saw sound bites on television, skimmed mainstream newspaper columns and saw that a credentialed scientist questioned anthropogenic global warming.

are causing climate change although more than 97 percent of scientists believe this to be true.<sup>392</sup>

Contrary to what is obvious for Jamieson, the general public is not going to peruse scientific journals and probably has no idea what 97 percent of scientists believe. But the majority of the populace is also not going to embrace conspiracy theories as fact and neither did conservative Protestants, including those within the fundamentalist religious right. They did not fall in line with the one-world conspiracy theory promoted by Cumbey in the 1980s, nor were they jumping on board with Robertson's and Black's similar argument in 1990. They believed what the scientific community told them, as evidenced by Dr. Land, but when they witnessed what they thought were legitimate skeptics speaking out – whose viewpoints were featured in mainstream newspapers -- they did not know what to make of it. It was not hard for many to reject anthropogenic global warming with the help of experts who negated the reality of a possible future disaster, which humans cannot observe in real time. Furthermore, public humiliation from the religious elite, as demonstrated by Falwell, likely convinced many in the close-knit community to reject environmental concerns or simply keep quiet. This mixture proved the magic combination for anti-environmental arguments to creep into the mainstream conservative Protestant and religious right community, solidifying the religious right as the anti-environmentalists we know today.

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<sup>392</sup> Dale Jamieson, *Reason in the Dark Time: Why the Struggle Against Climate Change Failed And What it Means for our Future*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 64.

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On May 6, 2014, the White House released a national climate report calling for “urgent action” regarding human-caused global warming. CNN reporter Jim Acosta warned that because Republicans refuse to take steps in curbing energy industries such as coal, President Obama would attempt to force reductions of pollutants through executive order.<sup>393</sup> Several months later, during the 2015 State of the Union Address, Obama claimed, “no challenge poses a greater threat to future generations than climate change.” The President pointed out that the opposition tries to dodge the evidence by arguing that there is not enough information to merit action. Obama disagreed, stating that he knows “a lot of really good scientists...” who say that global warming is happening. After he explained how the U.S. would reduce carbon emissions in an alliance with China, applause followed with the exception of Speaker of the House, Republican John Boehner, who sat emotionless.

Indeed, the GOP is not convinced that climate change is the product of human activity and ever since the Reagan Administration, the party has recognized efforts to protect the environment as a threat to free enterprise. The religious right was never really comfortable following their political allies into this debate. Only when forced in the 1990s as a response to possible major environmental policies stemming from the

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<sup>393</sup> CNN News online [http://www.cnn.com/2014/05/06/politics/white-house-climate-energy/index.html?hpt=hp\\_t1](http://www.cnn.com/2014/05/06/politics/white-house-climate-energy/index.html?hpt=hp_t1) (accessed May 6, 2014).

Earth Rio Summit and the Kyoto Treaty that threatened the economy did antipathy towards environmentalism really grow within the religious right.

As we look to the future, time will tell how the New Christian Right will continue to perceive environmental protection efforts. Liberty University is recycling now, but with Jerry Falwell Jr. allowing climate change deniers to address the student body, and secular conservatives in general reporting that thousands of scientists refute the idea that humans can impact global temperatures, the community will most likely stay on their present course. They will continue to function as a barrier within the larger American political landscape to environmental regulation policies. During the past few years, even Pat Robertson began denying anthropogenic climate change, citing cold temperatures as proof that it is all bunk. But perhaps the greatest losses in the battle were the missed opportunities at Earth Day 1970 and 1990. In the latter case, Richard Land initially tried to move the conservative-controlled SBC along the same path as the Evangelical Environmental Network with Jim Ball and Ron Sider, but was stopped before momentum could be gained. Other signs in the early 1990s that environmental sparks were flying among those associated with the religious right include the LU biology club's Earth Day participation. Interest in protecting the environment was never truly crushed, and leaders, most notably Jerry Falwell, had to aggressively keep at the issue, ultimately taking it more seriously after the release of the ECI.

In short, the religious right's current opposition towards environmental protection should be understood as an artificial development, a product of frantic efforts to keep in tune with a GOP alliance. The religious right's preferred tactic for

maintaining environmental opposition thus far is ridicule and it seems to be working. Until 1989, the community largely accepted what Schaeffer proposed in his understanding of humanity's proper place in God's hierarchical creation, although never putting it into practice. After 1990, the group learned to dismiss that respect because of economic and political reasons – a development that Francis Schaeffer would undoubtedly conclude upsets the correct role of God's hierarchical creation and therefore will lead to punishment by God.



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